



*Legend of the
Five Rings*

THE HIDDEN PEROR



ORIENTAL ADVENTURES

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WELCOME TO THE JADE EMPIRE!

For those of you who have been following the recent sourcebooks in Legend of the Five Rings, this book may appear a bit strange. Compared to the current ongoing storyline, it's something of a step back, a retelling of various stories. For long-time fans of the L5R CCG, the tales in this book will be familiar. This sourcebook retells the Hidden Emperor story arc from the Legend of the Five Rings Collectible Card Game. Just as *Time of the Void* explored the Clan War, *The Hidden Emperor* is a sourcebook that covers this very specific time in the Legend of the Five Rings continuity — The War Against the Darkness.

Though there are a number of new mechanical options in this book for player use, we recommend that only the GM read any further. Each chapter contains a number of spoilers relating to the ongoing story that the GM may wish to work into his own campaign, so by spoiling the future, you're only hurting yourself.

Why take a step back?

The most recently published L5R sourcebooks are set over three decades after the events in this book took place. Why would we want to dwell on the past?

To put it simply, the Hidden Emperor period was too interesting to ignore any longer. A significant period that colored many important events, many questions were left unanswered. A large number of fans wished to know more about the War Against the Darkness — what happened, when it happened, why it happened, and how. This book answers as many of those questions as possible.

For those players with campaigns set in modern Rokugan, this book can still be quite useful. The timelines are an invaluable history resource, and a possible inspiration for adventure hooks set in the present. (What happened to the castle where Kitsu Okura first met Akuma, for example? Is it still standing?) The new mechanical options, naturally, are timeless and can be used in almost any campaign. And this is to say nothing of enterprising GMs who may wish to update the adventure in this book for their modern campaign, or even hurl the players into the paths taken by their own ancestors and watch them attempt to survive the War Against the Darkness.

This isn't my story.

In a game like Legend of the Five Rings, where player characters share a setting with well known fictional characters, there is always the danger that the player characters will never live up to the example of the setting's famous heroes. Just because the timeline describes the War Against the Darkness in a linear fashion does not mean that the player characters cannot affect events in some manner. They should feel as though they are minor players in a larger game, or that they simply look on as heroes such as Ginawa and Isawa Hochiu perform marvelous deeds. The GM is highly encouraged to adapt the War Against the Darkness to showcase the player characters. Perhaps in your campaign, Ginawa and Hiroru never begin their quest. Perhaps Otaku

Kamoko never rescues the Emperor. Perhaps Hochiu never steps forward to battle Goju Adorai. Perhaps the player characters are the ones to fulfill these roles, and perhaps the war does not end quite the same way as it ends here....

The possibilities are endless.

What you'll find in this book...

This book is divided into six chapters, each of which is named after the original CCG expansions during the Hidden Emperor story arc. Each covers a different portion of that time period. Though the first chapter covers a wider time span than the other five, many important events happen in the later chapters so they have been divided and spread evenly to prevent confusion.

Each chapter begins with fiction set in that time period, followed by a timeline that describes the major events. This is followed in turn by a section detailing new mechanics for this period, adventure hooks, and descriptions of important NPCs that became prominent at this time. Each chapter concludes with part of an ongoing campaign set during the War Against the Darkness.

What do I need to use this adventure?

While many of the NPCs in this book use character options from various L5R sourcebooks, all you really need is the *Player's Guide* and the *Game Master's Guide* (for the traditional system) or *Rokugan*, the *Player's Handbook*, and the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (for the d20 system). While the various NPCs use character options from all the L5R sourcebooks, the ongoing campaign in each of the chapters is designed to draw only upon options presented in the core books and this volume. If you wish to use an NPC and do not have access to everything listed in his or her stats, feel free to edit their stats to your liking.

ROLE-PLAYING DURING THE WAR AGAINST THE DARKNESS

Much like *Time of the Void*, *The Hidden Emperor* describes a particularly bloody and divisive time in Rokugan's history. Many L5R campaigns feature mixed parties with characters of multiple clans. Can a Phoenix shugenja and Mantis samurai peacefully coexist in a party while Yoritomo lays siege to Kyuden Asako? The GM should consider questions such as these carefully lest these events that nearly shattered an Empire shatter the campaign as well.

There are several options that could help a party remain together during the War Against the Darkness. Most obvious is a party composed entirely of a single clan (though in the case of a Crane or Dragon party even this is not foolproof during this period). Obviously this sort of campaign comes about only on the rarest occasion and is unlikely to occur without the players and GM agreeing upon it in advance.

Another option comes from an old standard of L5R campaigns, the magistrate party. After the Emperor's disappearance, lawlessness and chaos are widespread. The need for loyal, dutiful magistrates is greater than ever. A party of Emerald Magistrates will be truly tested, forced to work together to preserve the unity of the Empire even as their clans enter war with one another.

A third option appears rather obvious, given the name of the sourcebook. Though each clan may have a separate objective, they are united in their loyalty to the Emperor. Following Toturi's kidnapping, perhaps the party gathers to attempt to discover what has become of Toturi. Each player character might bear different clues, different pieces to a puzzle that can only be completed by joining forces. Once they find the Emperor, no doubt the player characters will realize something is dreadfully wrong. If they know too much, Goju Adorai and his brethren will inevitably begin to hunt them. Even player characters from warring clans will be forced to band together by circumstance, allying against an enemy that only they understand. This requires a bit of extra work on the part of the GM and players alike as they figure out how their player characters relate to the mystery at hand, but results in a rewarding experience.

The only real challenge in playing a campaign during this period is, as in *Time of the Void*, Scorpion characters. The Scorpion Clan is blamed for Toturi's disappearance and exiled to the Burning Sands early in the story, thus any Scorpion character caught in Rokugan is likely to be arrested and executed as a traitor. A handful of Scorpion during this time period remained in Rokugan, hiding among the populace by removing their masks and posing as ronin. This option should be offered to Scorpion player characters, but with a measure of caution. Any Scorpion who remains in Rokugan after the Emerald Champion's edict takes an extraordinary risk. Those captured will be shown no mercy.

Some player characters will see this as an exciting challenge, but the GM must be careful not to coddle Scorpion who have gone "underground." A Scorpion in hiding should be in a constant struggle to keep the truth hidden. Further, those Scorpion who remain will be expected to spare no effort in finding a way to redeem their clan's stained honor. Any Scorpion who dodges his clan's punishment and spends his time in Rokugan idle will find his kinsmen most displeased when they finally return.

NEW MECHANICS

The Legend of the Five Rings game setting has been officially presented in two separate game systems, the *Legend of the Five Rings RPG 2nd Edition System* (presented in the *Player's Guide* and *Game Master's Guide*) and *Wizards of the Coast's d20 System™* (presented in *Rokugan™*, the official supplement to *Oriental Adventures™*). While these two systems are somewhat dissimilar, the setting presented in both versions of the game is the same, and thus it is our intent to present a sourcebook that is useful no matter which of these systems you choose to use when running your game.

Generally, when a new rule or mechanic is presented, whenever applicable we will present equivalent d20 System™ and L5R RPG 2E System versions in close proximity.

Rules and options for the d20 System™ look like this.

Rules and options for the L5R RPG 2E System look like this.

Occasionally, extensive new information may be exclusive to a specific system (such as *New Paths* for the L5R RPG 2E System or new feats for the d20 System™). In such a case, the information will follow the same convention as above.

The d20 System™ material will appear in black and the L5R RPG 2E System material in blue.

In the case of characters, occasionally, a character's name will be followed by a short explanation of his character class in lieu of full statistical information. Such an example might look like this:

TORITAKA TATSUNE

[Samurai 6/Berserker 4/Shadowlands Veteran 10; Hida Bushi 5/Hida Avenger 3]

The information presented before the semicolon is the character's class and level in the d20 System.™ The information presented after the semicolon is the character's rank and school in the L5R RPG 2E System.

Sometimes material must be presented for one system or the other. In such cases, this text will be contained in a callout box with a gray background, such as the one below. The headers for these boxes will clearly label which information is for the d20 System™ and which information is for the L5R RPG 2nd Edition ("L5R RPG 2E").

WHAT IS THE LYING DARKNESS?

You may note that many of the events that take place in the history section seem rather curious or contradictory. Most such events will explain that this results from manipulations by the Lying Darkness, also known as Nothing, a powerful force for evil that is highly active during this time period.

Before the world existed, there was Nothing. When Nothing realized it was alone, it became afraid, and created one third of the world. It desired a companion, and created another third. When it realized that it had ruined the perfect nothingness of the universe and regretted what it had done, the world became complete.

When Lady Sun and Lord Moon went about the task of handing out names to everything that existed, Nothing decided that it did not want a name. It begged the shadow to hide it so that it would not be noticed, and thus remained undefined, and an embodiment of the formless tempestuous void that once was.

Nothing hid within the shadow and watched carefully, looking for a way to destroy this world it had accidentally made. It saw potential in the youngest of Lord Moon's children, the one named Fu Leng. Fu Leng was wise but also very arrogant with a rage deep inside him that, if tempered properly, could destroy all that existed. Nothing came to Fu Leng and revealed itself, told him the true origins of the universe, and taught him the ways of magic. It offered to ally with him, to grant him true power if it would help him unmake all of existence.

Fu Leng listened intently for a long time. When Nothing finished teaching him, the young Kami smirked and refused to ally with it. Nothing became enraged and attacked Fu Leng, but the Kami already knew too much. He defended himself with a crystal sword, cutting off a piece of Nothing and wounding it terribly. It fled back into the shadows.

Bitter and terrified, Nothing turned instead to Lord Moon. This time, it did not reveal itself. It whispered in Lord Moon's

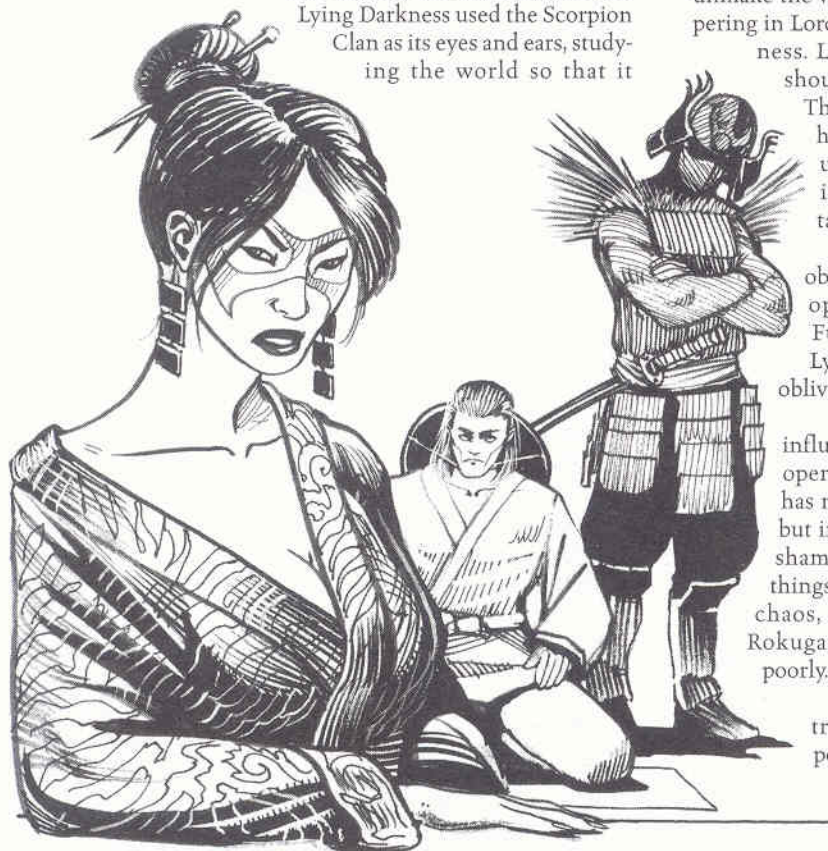
ear, driving him to madness, turning his suspicions against Fu Leng. As Lord Moon hunted his children, Nothing offered Fu Leng a place to hide in the shadow, a final chance to form an alliance. Before Fu Leng could reply, Togashi drew his brother from the shadows and both were devoured by Lord Moon. Nothing considered this an acceptable conclusion until Hantei arrived and rescued his siblings. They fell to the mortal realm, where Lord Moon would no longer chase after them.

As the Kami fell, Nothing flew to darkest Jigoku in an instant. It whispered in the ear of the living Realm of Evil, warning it that the Kami were dangerous and must be destroyed — Fu Leng most of all. But Jigoku was more intrigued than afraid of the way Nothing described Fu Leng. The realm snatched Fu Leng as he fell from the sky, dragging him deep into the earth and suffusing him with its corruption.

Nothing now became even more afraid. This Fu Leng was powerful, and he knew its weaknesses. It had acted too rashly in seeking an ally, and instead had created a powerful rival. Nothing saw but one recourse — to retreat into shadow and hope that Fu Leng forgot about it.

When the Seven Thunders defeated Fu Leng, Nothing rejoiced. It knew, however, that Fu Leng was not truly dead, so it hurried to his ruined keep to find a weapon that might be used against the Kami when he returned. It found the severed obsidian hand of Onnotangu, Lord Moon, and drew it into the shadows. As it fled from the Shadowlands, it came across the two humans who had survived the battle with Fu Leng. One, surprisingly enough, was not truly human at all, but made from the piece of Nothing that Fu Leng had carved away so long ago. Nothing offered Shosuro a chance to escape, if she helped it.

She agreed, and for centuries the Lying Darkness used the Scorpion Clan as its eyes and ears, studying the world so that it



D20 AND L5R

Since 2001, *Legend of the Five Rings* has used two separate mechanical systems, the classic “roll and keep” system of *Legend of the Five Rings Second Edition*, and the d20 system made popular by *Dungeons and Dragons*.

As you may already know, *The Hidden Emperor* will be the last *Legend of the Five Rings* book that uses the d20 system. A number of factors contributed to this decision, including the fact that *Oriental Adventures* (a book which the L5R sourcebooks draw upon but which was not printed by Alderac Entertainment Group) is now out of print. Following this book, all future *Legend of the Five Rings* sourcebooks will use the new Third Edition L5R system, a refinement of the classic “roll and keep system.”

This is not meant as a criticism of the d20 system, but rather a return to the game’s roots. For those fans of the original system who have stuck with us the entire time, we thank you and hope you’ll enjoy Third Edition as much as you’ve enjoyed everything else. For those of you who came on board during the dual-system period, we sincerely hope that you’ll stick around to see what else Rokugan has in store...

might better know how to unmake it. It never truly understood the world — it could not understand and remain what it was. Instead, it found humans who were willing to help. The house of the ninja named Goju fell out of favor and was to be executed for treason. The Lying Darkness drew them into shadow and made them its servants.

For centuries it waited, plotted, and planned for a chance to unmake the world again. It stayed close to Onnotangu, whispering in Lord Moon’s ear, driving him ever deeper into madness. Lord Moon, it reasoned, was its only defense should Fu Leng ever return to hunt it once more.

Though Onnotangu believes the little shadow is his willing servant, in truth he has become its unthinking slave. When the Darkness unleashes its power upon the mortal realm again, Onnotangu will serve as its most powerful minion.

On the Day of Thunder, the only true obstacle remaining, the only one who could truly oppose the Darkness, was destroyed. With Fu Leng dead, could anyone truly stop the Lying Darkness from casting all the realms into oblivion?

For two years, the Darkness subtly spread its influence throughout the Empire. As *Hidden Emperor* opens, there is not a single being in Rokugan who has not felt its touch. Its influence is always subtle, but inevitably profound. In its wake it leaves doubt, shame, indecision, causes noble men to do foolish things. While its mortal servants bring distraction and chaos, the Darkness’ subtle influence insures that Rokugan’s heroes will deal with the resulting crises poorly.

Can even the greatest heroes of the Empire triumph against a menace with such insidious power? Read on and see.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE HIDDEN EMPEROR

Kyuden Isawa, 1130

Even two years after the Day of Thunder, the lands in and around Kyuden Isawa still bore the scars of the Clan War. The once imposing towers had collapsed, and many of the libraries, famous across the Empire for the knowledge they contained, were empty. The forests surrounding the city reflected the devastation within, as large swaths had been burnt away, leaving little but ash in their wake. Yet even in the midst of this tragedy, the Phoenix were rising, as a new forest was growing in the rich soil left by the destruction of the old.

Nature's effort to restore the land was echoed by the workers within the city. Scrolls were copied from other Phoenix strongholds and acquired from other Clans, construction was ongoing, and fealty was offered to shugenja from across the Empire. Although work was far from complete, the Phoenix, like their namesake, were filled with hope, and were determined to see that hope realized.

In one rebuilt dojo, far from the hubbub of the castle's court, several children were also helping to create the future of the Clan. Of course, like most children, they did not realize the implications of what they were doing at the time. From their perspective, they were being asked to interpret a long and intricate parable from the New Tao, which seemed to their young eyes to be quite pointless. After all, they were shugenja-in-training, the most promising students the Phoenix had to offer. Why did they need to waste their time studying koans and riddles, when they were the future heirs to the power of the Phoenix?

Nichi, an Asako orphaned by the war, was sure he knew why the exercise was important. "Power," he said, "is nothing without wisdom to guide it."

Shunin, one of the elder students, fluttered her fan, indicating disagreement. "No, Nichi, silly," she gently chided the younger boy. "We study these to expand our perceptions so we can better interact

with the kami, and thus become better shugenja". The students looked expectantly at their sensei.

At the head of the classroom, the sensei looked back at her students. An outsider would initially have a difficult time separating her the rest of the children; the teacher, having not yet entered her teens, was difficult to set apart from the rest of the class, consisting of children from 10 to 14 years of age. However, a careful observer would have noticed subtle differences between her and her peers: her thoughtful scholarly gaze, the poise of someone who had been to court, the easy stride of one who has traveled many harsh roads. Most distinct was her voice; it possessed a calm, warm, knowing certainty, the kind expected from a revered monk of the Brotherhood, not a young girl. It was this voice that held her students enthralled as Isawa Osugi answered their question.

"The truth is both simpler and more complex than you think," she said, holding up a worn, well-read copy of the New Tao. "As you know, the Tao shows us how the Hooded Ronin sees the world." She paused, waiting for a response.

"But why is it so important that we understand how the Hooded Ronin sees the world? Is it because he helped Emperor Toturi kill Fu Leng?" Nichi asked.

A guilty hush fell over the class at Nichi's impulsive outburst. Fu Leng was a frightening figure to mention, and the children had learned that since his disappearance, Toturi's name was never to be used lightly. Osugi, undaunted by either name, proceeded with her lesson.

"These stories show how one enlightened man looks at the world around him, and how he sees himself in the order of things. By examining his parables, we can understand what he believes, and why."

"...but what if we disagree with what he believes?"

"That is fine. The point is not to do everything he did, but to..." Osugi trailed off as she searched for the correct phrase. "The elements, people, nature, even the kami, all have a role to play. They fit together. Understanding how and why different parts interact is an important step in finding your own path. The Tao explains how the Ronin found his way, to show us how we might find our own." Osugi winked at her fellow children. "Our duties are more complicated than studying magic and giving devotions to the kami."

A gong sounded outside the class, signaling the end of the day's lessons. The class bowed deeply to Osugi, and after the traditional "Arigato, sensei," the children gathered their scrolls and ran off, many to study, some to various duties, and a few simply to enjoy themselves. Osugi gathered her supplies, and headed towards her quarters in the central tower of the castle.

Shunin, who had been waiting for Osugi, fell into step beside her. With class complete, they fell into easy conversation, with Shunin, the elder and more outgoing of the two, talking excitedly about various happenings around the castle. Eventually, conversation drifted towards gempukku ceremonies, which would be happening in a few days.

"Aren't you excited, Osugi-chan? Finally, after all these years of studying, we will be real shugenja!"

Osugi smiled at her friend. "We are already real shugenja, Shunin. Our gempukku is just a chance for us to prove that we are ready to serve the Clan."

Mischief and disbelief colored Shunin's deep black eyes. "I know you've assisted Tsukune-sama, attended Imperial Court, and been selected by The Hooded Ronin to record the New Tao, but even the legendary Isawa Osugi must be looking forward to her long-delayed gempukku."

"Of course I am! I have been waiting for this since the Clan War, but I was always so busy." Osugi's gaze wandered, lost in memories.

Shunin nodded. "We missed you too."

Osugi looked back at Shunin, and her smile returned. "It is good to be back. I even had new kimono tailored for the occasion."

Shunin giggled. "That's more like it. I just hope our new yojimbo will appreciate how important we are."

Osugi rolled her eyes, and the two walked cheerfully back to their rooms, chatting all the way.

Osugi entered her room with a contented sigh. While it was often awkward for her to be called upon to teach students who frequently were older than she was, her duties in the last two years had been far easier than they were during the Clan Wars. In fact, she rather enjoyed the challenges of instruction, as concepts and incantations that came intuitively to her often-eluded shugenja many years her senior.

Fortunes willing, after her gempukku, she hoped to take on an aspiring Ishi as an apprentice. She would have done so long ago, as Ishiken were rare at the best of times, and it was vital for the future of the Phoenix to train new ones as soon as possible, but it was simply impractical for her to take an apprentice prior to her graduation to adulthood. Osugi shook her head in amusement. Looked at from the outside, a great many things about her situation were simply absurd.

Osugi surveyed her room. It was fairly large, as befitted the room of an instructor and scholar of the Isawa, but was also sparsely furnished, a result of Osugi's frequent travels. Few noteworthy possessions adorned the room, save for a small selection of outfits in a corner closet and a table well stocked with paper, pens, and inks. The only unusual item in the room was an unopened red box by the base of her futon, containing her new kimono. Placing her scroll satchel down upon the table, she sat down and proceeded to write. Grand Master Kuro had requested her assistance in researching a new ritual, and she had some ideas she wanted to experiment with before bringing them to his attention.

Some time passed before a voice at her door drew Osugi's attention away from her work.

"Osugi-san, if I may intrude...?"

Osugi turned her head and saw the kindly, weathered features of Naka Kuro, Grand Master of the Elements and sensei to the Phoenix Clan, at her door. Rising smoothly to face him, she bowed deeply. "Master Kuro, how may I be of service?"

Naka Kuro stepped into her chamber sliding the door shut behind him. He appeared uncharacteristically hesitant, perhaps as a result of whatever was written on the letter he was carrying in his hands. Osugi met his gaze, and waited.

"Osugi," began Kuro, "this missive arrived today from Otosan Uchi. I felt that I should discuss this with you before composing a response."

Osugi nodded her curiosity piqued. What would prompt Naka to consult with her prior to making a decision?

"According to this, there appear to have been several discrepancies found between the copies of the Tao distributed across the Empire. The debates between various groups regarding interpretation have become quite heated." Kuro paused.

Osugi, as a shugenja and scholar herself, was aware of how intense disagreements could become. "I believe I understand, Master Kuro. They would like to have their debate resolved, but do not wish to remove the original copy from the Imperial Libraries over this."

"Yes. And since only you and Emperor Toturi were present at its inception, and the Emperor is missing..."

"...I am the logical person to assist." Osugi agreed. "Master Kuro, why did you come here to inform me of this? What decision is there to be made?"

"Apparently, this matter is of concern to the Imperial Court, enough so that they would like you to travel there immediately. Shinjo Yokatsu in particular has stated that he believes your services would be invaluable, and has convinced the Court to offer the Phoenix Imperial assistance in our rebuilding efforts upon your arrival as a gesture of gratitude."

"Very well. I will prepare to depart at once."

Kuro shook his head. "Osugi, the missive was a request, not a demand."

Osugi looked out her window for a moment, at the towers still being raised, the homes still being built. "Master Kuro, the Imperial assistance is substantial, is it not?"

"Yes."

"Then I will go now."

"Osugi, there is no hurry. You can certainly be allowed a few days to prepare."

"The sooner I arrive at Otosan Uchi, the sooner the Phoenix will finish being born anew." Kuro watched as Osugi gathered her few belongings from the room.

"Osugi, Shinjo Yokatsu is not a particularly pious man. Why would he intercede on our behalf?"

"Compassion, perhaps? The Master of the Four Winds is known to be very insistent when he wants something."

Isawa Osugi finished her packing, and slid open the door. She bowed again to the Grand Master of the Elements.

"Farewell, Master Kuro."

Naka Kuro was left alone in her room, the space barren save for an unopened red box.

THE HIDDEN EMPEROR TIMELINE

THE EARLY REIGN OF TOTURI I

As the Hidden Emperor saga begins, two years have passed since the events described in *Time of the Void*. Toturi I reigns from the newly crafted Jade Throne in the heart of Otosan Uchi. With Fu Leng slain and the destinies of the Seven Thunders fulfilled, Toturi proclaims a new age, an Age of Man, the age of the Jade Empire.

The early days of Toturi's rule are a peaceful time, especially compared to the tumultuous events of the Clan War. After facing Fu Leng's armies, even the most battle-hardened generals seem willing to put aside their personal feuds and animosities for the sake of rebuilding the Empire — at least for a time.

THE CRAB CLAN

(CURRENT LEADER: HIDA YAKAMO)

The Clan War caused many to look upon the Crab with fear and distrust, but Crab Champion Hida Yakamo has fought hard to win back the Crab's honor. The Kaiu Wall has been repaired and once again stands as a symbol of defiance against the Shadowlands. Through an alliance with the Naga, Hiruma Castle has been retaken and rebuilt. Kuni shugenja perform rituals that leave the castle and its immediate environs free of the Taint, and begin plans to purge the entire Hiruma territories of the Taint as well.

Former Crab Champion Hida Kisada dies shortly after hearing the news that Hiruma Castle has returned to Crab hands.

The Falcon Clan, longtime neighbors of the Crab, is nearly wiped out when a *maho-tsukai's* ritual unleashes a powerful spirit in their lands. With aid from the Crab, the Falcon survive, but only just. Unable to continue protecting their lands without aid, the Falcon swear fealty to the Crab Champion. Toturi gives the alliance his blessing, and the Toritaka become the newest family of the Crab Clan.

THE CRANE CLAN

(CURRENT LEADER: DOJU KUWANAN)

Once the wealthiest clan, much of the Crane's fortune was either looted during the Clan War or exhausted hiring mercenaries to help defend their besieged territories. With the ascension of the Toturi Dynasty, many Crane are left scrambling to rebuild their webs of political influence. Though the Crane now lack the political and economic power that once defined them, ironically they now possess quite respectable military might. Given all the crises they faced during the Clan War, those who serve under Kuwanan's banner are among the most resourceful and experienced soldiers in the Empire. Kuwanan charges his most trusted general, Daidoji Uji, with protecting the clan's borders until they can rebuild their influence in the new Emperor's court.

THE DRAGON CLAN

(CURRENT LEADER: HITOMI)

Following the death of Dragon Champion Togashi Yokuni on the Day of Thunder, the Order of Togashi unexpectedly recognize the Dragon Thunder, Mirumoto Hitomi, as the new Dragon Champion. Some Togashi even swear fealty to Hitomi, taking her name as their family name. Hitomi abandons the Mirumoto name to honor their devotion. She soon learns that with Togashi's wisdom she has also gained the power to grant mystic tattoos, though the powers granted by her tattoos tend to be darker and more violent than her predecessor's.

Under Hitomi's rule, the Dragon become even more reclusive than before, retreating into their mountain homes and seldom interacting with outsiders. Strangely, a handful of individuals in every clan hear the siren song of "The Lady" and venture into the mountains, where they receive mystic tattoos and take the Hitomi name.

Though Hitomi does not yet realize it, a fragment of the Lying Darkness, which for centuries has lain dormant within the Obsidian Hand she wears, is awakened by the power she inherited from Togashi. The Darkness and Togashi's influence war for control over Hitomi's soul. The new Dragon Champion gradually descends into madness. Uncertain what is happening and desperate for guidance, Hitomi invites the fallen tamashii, Kokujin, into the High House of Light.

Kokujin, who takes the Hitomi name, advises that Hitomi cannot find balance unless she can guarantee the loyalty of those who follow her. He demands that all Togashi abandon their name and swear fealty to the order of Hitomi. Those who refuse to do so are exiled from the Dragon Clan. In a startling move, Hitomi unleashes her tattooed men upon those Togashi unwilling or unable to leave, butchering them on the spot in their home monasteries. Among those slain is Hitomi's own grandfather, Togashi Gaijutsu.

THE LION CLAN

(CURRENT LEADER: IKOMA TSANURI)

The early reign of Toturi is a troubling time for the Lion. Their loyalty to the Hantei Dynasty was unquestioned, so to see the end of the Hantei and the coronation of a dishonored member of their own clan is, to many, unthinkable. The fact that Toturi I defeated the dark god Fu Leng redeems him in the eyes of most Lion, but nonetheless a handful request the right to seppuku to express their distaste for this new dynasty.

Ironically, the Lion Clan's opposition to Toturi's reign is not as strong as it could have been considering that many of those most loyal to the Hantei died on the Day of Thunder. Some, including the renowned Ikoma Ujiaki, continued to fight "Toturi the Usurper" in the Hantei's name even as Fu Leng's troops tore them apart. As a former student of Toturi, Ikoma Tsanuri recognizes that the Empire is in capable hands and does her best to stamp out any resentment toward the new Emperor with simple reason and endless patience.

THE MANTIS CLAN / YORITOMO'S

ALLIANCE (CURRENT LEADER: YORITOMO)

Catapulted to Great Clan status by the new Emperor's edict, the Mantis have spent the last two years struggling to earn the respect of their fellow clans. Though only the foolish would dare understate Yoritomo's heroism or the sacrifices the Alliance made during the Clan War, few are willing to afford them the same privileges as a Great Clan. To complicate matters, many of the Minor Clan samurai who allied with Yorit-

omo during the war begin to return to their homes. The Son of Storms swiftly realizes that the fortunes of war brought him greatness, but without war the Yoritomo family may soon stand alone once more.

Disgusted at the lack of dedication shown by other members of the alliance, Tsuruchi of the Wasp Clan swears fealty to Yoritomo. He does not take the Yoritomo name, however, instead promising that one day his family will serve the Mantis under his own name. Yoritomo is greatly impressed by the Wasp's ambition.

THE PHOENIX CLAN (CURRENT LEADERS: SHIBA TSUKUNE, NAKA KURO)

Following the Clan War, the Phoenix are in a state of near-total ruin. Most of their most prominent shugenja are dead or missing, including the entire Elemental Council. Though the new Phoenix Champion, Shiba Tsukune, possesses the same soul that has guided her predecessors since the founding of the Empire, she is a virtual unknown in the courts and has great difficulty making the needs of her clan heard.

Though times are bleak for the Phoenix, a ray of hope shines upon them. Naka Kuro, Grand Master of the Elements, returns to the clan of his birth. He reopens the doors of the Isawa Academy, inviting any and all with the gift of magic to study as shugenja. Within months, the halls of Kyuden Isawa are filled with promising novices. Kuro keeps a careful eye open for those who show the potential to become new Elemental Masters.

THE SCORPION CLAN (CURRENT LEADER: BAYUSHI KACHIKO)

Following the Day of Thunder, the once dishonored Scorpion Clan is returned to Great Clan status under the rule of the former Empress, Bayushi Kachiko. Though this move gains Toturi little popularity in the courts, it does earn him the unwavering loyalty of the Scorpion Clan — and Toturi knows that the loyalty of a Scorpion is a powerful thing indeed. The samurai of the Clan of Secrets begin to rebuild their ravaged houses while their enemies wait carefully for them to prove unworthy of the Emperor's trust. In the meantime, the shugenja of the Soshi family notice that a disturbing number of Scorpion agents who possess *kage yakiin* (shadow brands) have disappeared on missions and have not returned.

THE UNICORN CLAN (CURRENT LEADER: SHINJO YOKATSU)

Like the Dragon Clan, the Unicorn escaped the Clan War largely unscathed. Due to their relative strength, Toturi I grants a large number of Unicorn magistrates Emerald Magistrate status to restore peace throughout the Empire. For many months the Unicorn ride across the Empire, destroying remnants of Fu Leng's army as well as opportunistic bandits seeking to profit from the chaos of the Clan War. In short order the sight of Unicorn horsemen becomes synonymous with law and order. This is a development that sits quite well with Shinjo Yokatsu, secretly one of the Ten Masters of the Kolat.

THE SHADOWLANDS (CURRENT LEADERS: KUNI YORI, KYOSO NO ONI)

Despite the Crab Clan's best efforts to kill him, the traitor Kuni Yori escapes the battlefield on the Day of Thunder. The mad shugenja even somehow manages to infiltrate the Imper-

ial Palace and steal the head of the dead Emperor from the funeral pyre. Fleeing to the Shadowlands, he attempts to muster what forces he can for his inevitable vengeance upon the Crab Clan. Yori's writings, entitled *Oaths and Betrayals*, become a call to arms among the Lost. However, some who dwell in the Shadowlands do not wish to bow to another leader so soon after their bitter defeat. The Oni Lord Kyoso no Oni becomes one of Yori's most visible opponents, going so far as to slaughter any creature she sees who wears the mon once worn by Yogo Junzo's followers.

THE NAGA (CURRENT LEADER: THE QAMAR)

Though they now have some measure of acceptance among humans, the Naga are cautious neighbors at best. As a gesture of goodwill they dispatch their armies to aid the Crab in retaking Hiruma Castle. Among the mystic jakla of the Cobra bloodline, hope for the future begins to wear thin. The Cobra once believed that the flawed spell which had cast their entire race into endless slumber was at an end, but now it seems that the return of Fu Leng was merely a brief interruption. Throughout the Shinomen, Naga begin to return to their slumber. The Cobra do their best to conceal the truth for now, all the while doing what they can to find a way to reverse the spell.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SHINSEI (CURRENT LEADER: TAKAO)

The monks of Shinsei settle into a strangely unfamiliar role following the Day of Thunder — the role of heroes. Rare is the peasant who has not heard of the Hooded Ronin or the many other monks who took up arms to defend themselves from Fu Leng's armies. The lesser classes continue to look upon the brothers of Shinsei with an increased measure of awe and respect, a change that some of the more humble initiates find very awkward.

Shortly before the Hooded Ronin vanishes into obscurity, his conversations with the new Emperor are recorded in a document that has come to be known as the New Tao. Many Shinseist scholars eagerly dive into studying this Tao. A few are surprised by the implications inherent in the New Tao, including a heightened emphasis on the need to cast off false loyalties and find enlightenment through free and independent thought. None suspect that Isawa Osugi, the scribe who recorded the New Tao, has subtly seeded the document with Kolar subtext.

Upon their exile from the Dragon lands, many former Togashi find a welcome home among the Brotherhood. Though the followers of Shinsei cannot begin to understand the circumstances that would lead Hitomi to exile and slaughter her own kinsmen, they are more than eager to grant refuge to the survivors.

TOTURI'S ARMY (CURRENT LEADER: TOTURI II)

The unlikely band of ronin and outcasts who once followed the Black Lion are perhaps more surprised than anyone else when their leader becomes Emperor. As most of the former Imperial Guard died on the Day of Thunder, Toturi offers all those who once followed him positions in the Imperial Guard. Many of the surviving members of the former Imperial Guard likewise begin to wear the symbol of the wolf in recognition of Toturi's days as a ronin hero.

Toku, one of the most famous heroes of the Clan War, comes forward shortly after the Emperor's coronation and confesses to Toturi that he is not truly a samurai. He humbly requests that Toturi allow him one last true act as a samurai — seppuku. Toturi denies Toku's request, claiming that Toku was a truer samurai than most born to the name. He also names Toku the Captain of the Imperial Guard (though Takuan continues to command the Emperor's troops in the field) and names a new Minor Clan, the Monkey, with Toku as its daimyo. The Monkey are not yet granted any official lands, but make their home in the Imperial City.

YEAR 1129, MONTH OF THE TIGER (LATE WINTER)

NORIKAZU'S RAVINGS

Isawa Norikazu, one of the few skilled Phoenix shugenja to survive the Day of Thunder, falls into a deep fever for fifteen days. During the fever, he spouts a range of wild prophecies, all of which are dutifully recorded by Phoenix scribes who are aware of Norikazu's gifts. The prophecies, referred to as Norikazu's Ravings, are a mad hodgepodge of vague ramblings and very specific references to upcoming threats to the Empire. One of the more memorable verses states that "When darkness falls over the Empire, two men will ride forth to save it. One man will find his master and the other will kill him." Even more disturbing is a warning that the Phoenix choose to keep to themselves — that "the Splendid Emperor will die by his own hand."

OTAKU KAMOKO DISAPPEARS

For years, Otaku Kamoko has hunted for the truth behind her mother's mysterious death. Over the last two years she has uncovered a variety of clues pointing to a sinister conspiracy woven throughout her own clan. Uncertain who to trust, she vanishes from Unicorn lands without warning. She pursues her only true lead — that the Lion general Matsu Agetoki commanded the army that killed her mother.

Shortly after Kamoko disappears, Agetoki vanishes from his post in Lion lands as well.

FLIGHT OF DRAGONS

For their own mysterious reasons, the Elemental Dragons withdraw their influence from the mortal world. Some theorize that the dragons are in mourning over Togashi's death. Others wonder if the dragons do not approve of the new dynasty that has come to power. Others simply worry that dark times are ahead, and the dragons have withdrawn to gird themselves for the coming storm. The Dragon of the Void, however, finds it cannot completely abandon the mortals it has come to cherish. It leaves behind a nemuranai that bears some fraction of his power. This is the Dragon's Claw Katana, a relic it leaves in the safe-keeping of the Crane Clan.

HIDA O-USHI'S WEDDING

Crab Champion Hida Yakamo recognizes the need for an heir to the Crab Clan, but has no time to dedicate to courting a wife. Thus, he commands his younger sister, O-Ushi, to marry. O-Ushi is outraged by the command, but will not defy her



brother. She announces a tournament, inviting all who would seek her hand to compete in hand-to-hand combat. Further, she insists that she be given the right to participate and, if she wins, secure her independence. Yakamo grudgingly agrees. Though O-Ushi and Daidoji Uji defeat most of the combatants, they incapacitate one another in their final confrontation. The win thus goes by default to the one contestant wise enough to avoid O-Ushi during the great melee — Shinjo Yasamura, son of the Unicorn daimyo.

YEAR 1130, MONTH OF THE HARE (EARLY SPRING)

DISAPPEARANCE OF TOTURI I

As a gesture of unity, Emperor Toturi holds Winter Court at Otsan Uchi so that all clans may meet as equals. At the end of the court, he intends to hold a second coronation, now that all of the clans have recovered somewhat from the horrors of the Clan War, so that all servants of the Empire can reaffirm their loyalty to the throne. The night before this intended coronation, Emperor Toturi vanishes from his chambers. Two of his guards, including his personal yojimbo Mikio, are found dead at the scene.

Emerald Champion Kakita Toshimoko investigates the scene, and comes to a disturbing conclusion. A large number of unidentified Scorpion samurai were seen entering the palace shortly before the kidnapping, but vanished without a trace. A red silken scarf, of the sort frequently worn as a

Scorpion mask, is found at the scene of the crime. The Imperial Court is outraged. They demand the Scorpion Clan surrender the culprits or all will be punished for the crime.

To Toshimoko, the crime seems uncharacteristic for the Scorpion. Kitsuki Yasu investigates at Toshimoko's request, and finds the evidence accusing the Scorpion to be false. By Imperial Law, unfortunately, the mounting testimony cannot be ignored. Yasu warns Toshimoko that if he does not find a culprit quickly, the clans will fall to blaming one another, causing the Clan War to begin anew.

THE CHANCELLOR

Toturi's general, Takuan, is named Imperial Chancellor in the Emperor's absence. Takuan is a man unaccustomed to the subtleties of politics, thus he turns to Imperial Advisor Kakita Yoshi for aid. Yoshi complies willingly, and quickly becomes the true power behind the Jade Throne.

THE HUNT BEGINS

Bayushi Kachiko knows that her clan will inevitably be exiled for Toturi's kidnapping, and suspects that the true culprit is an enemy of the Scorpion Clan. She summons two members of Toturi's Army, the ronin swordsman Ginawa and the ninja Matsu Hiroru, and charges them with discovering the true location of Toturi's kidnapper, promising them whatever aid the Scorpion Clan can provide. Matsu Hiroru already suspects the truth, a truth he is loath to share even with Ginawa. In his years of hunting in the shadows, Hiroru has already encountered the minions of Goju Adorai a handful of times. He fears that only they could truly be responsible for this kidnapping.

THE SCORPION EXILE

With a heavy heart, Kakita Toshimoko commands the Scorpion Clan to be exiled to the Burning Sands. He commands the Lion general Matsu Gohei to escort Bayushi Kachiko and her followers beyond the Empire's borders.

All Scorpion children under the age of twelve are allowed to remain in the Empire, in the care of the Crane Clan. Ostensibly this is done to protect the Empire against Scorpion revenge, but in reality it is a gesture of apology from the Emerald Champion toward a clan that he knows is innocent.

Not all of the Scorpion accept this punishment. Bayushi Aramoro and a number of other Scorpion remain in the Empire at Kachiko's request, casting aside their masks so they will not be recognized and hiding disguised as peasants or ronin. To those Scorpion who survived the Clan War, such subterfuge comes easily.

THE GREY CRANE

Shortly after the Scorpion are exiled, Kakita Toshimoko abandons the Emerald Armor on the cliffs near Kyuden Doji, along with a final haiku. Most assume he has taken his own life, and Toshimoko does nothing to dissuade the rumor. Donning nondescript armor and a mempo to conceal his face, he becomes a ronin calling himself simply "The Grey Crane." In this guise he begins his own quest to discover the truth behind Toturi's kidnapping.

In Toshimoko's absence, Shinjo Shirasu takes command of the Emerald Magistrates until such a time as a new Emerald Champion can be chosen.

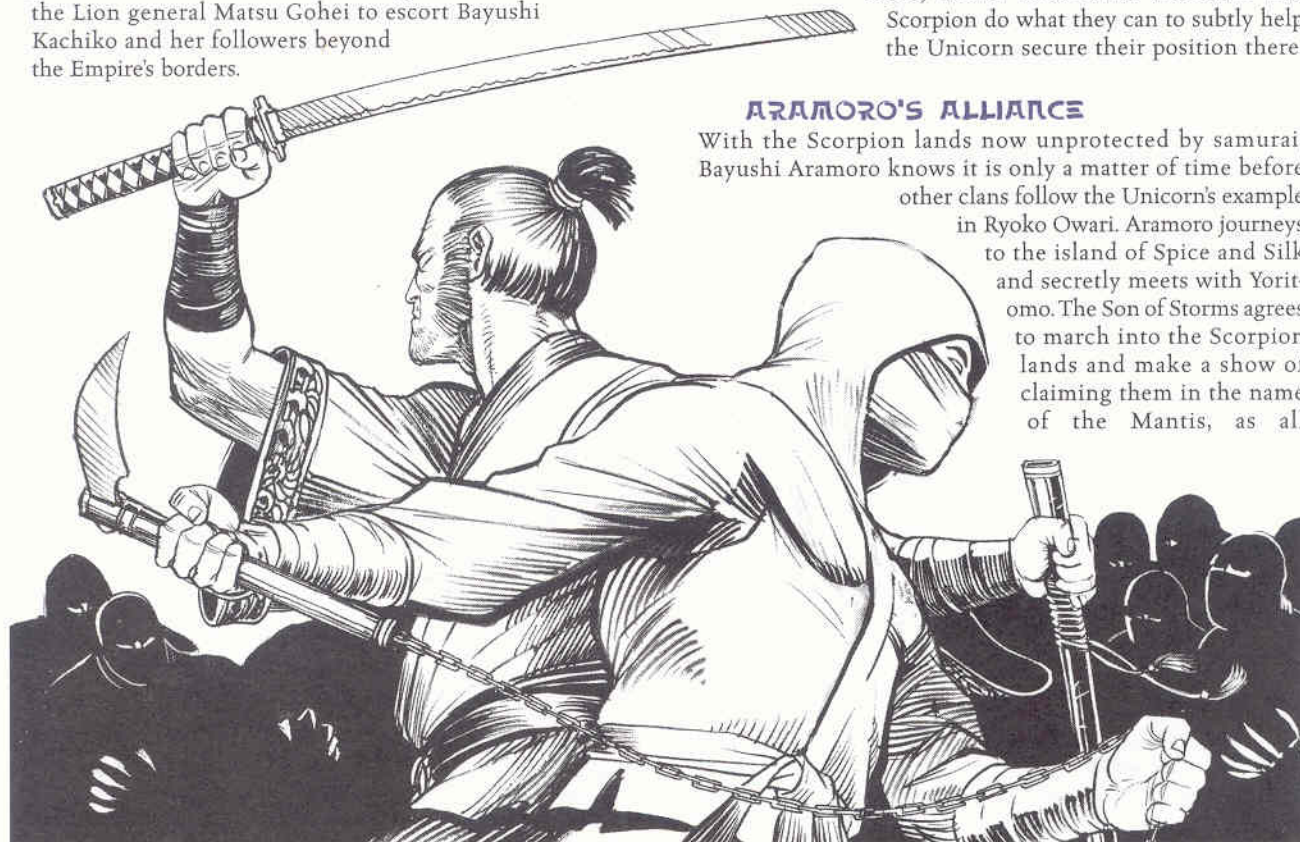
YEAR 1130, MONTH OF THE SERPENT (LATE SPRING)

THE UNICORN TAKE THE CITY OF LIES

In the absence of the Scorpion Clan, Unicorn troops march into Ryoko Owari and claim it. The hidden Scorpion still within the city are resentful, but would prefer the Unicorn control the city (as the Unicorn have always had a presence there) rather than some outsider. The Scorpion do what they can to subtly help the Unicorn secure their position there.

ARAMORO'S ALLIANCE

With the Scorpion lands now unprotected by samurai, Bayushi Aramoro knows it is only a matter of time before other clans follow the Unicorn's example in Ryoko Owari. Aramoro journeys to the island of Spice and Silk and secretly meets with Yoritomo. The Son of Storms agrees to march into the Scorpion lands and make a show of claiming them in the name of the Mantis, as all



'unaligned' lands are the domain of the Mantis under Toturi's edicts. When the Scorpion clear their name and return, the Mantis will surrender the lands to them in return for their future aid in the courts. Having nothing to lose and everything to gain, Yoritomo agrees to Aramoro's terms. To seal the bargain, Aramoro fosters his son, Aramasu, to the Mantis Champion.

YEAR 1130, MONTH OF THE DOG (MID-FALL)

SHORI IS STOLEN

The Ancestral Sword of the Lion, which has been in the possession of the Crane Clan since the Clan War, disappears from Shinden Asahina. Further investigation reveals that the crime was committed by Daidoji Osen, who was in actuality a Kitsu agent masquerading as a Daidoji who perished in the War.

Osen commits seppuku shortly after he returns the sword to Shiro Matsu. His final haiku is an apology to his Crane wife, Sasumiko, who committed suicide when she discovered his true identity but could not bring herself to expose him.

YEAR 1130, MONTH OF THE TIGER (LATE WINTER)

THE KAZAQ'S DREAM

In the Shinomen forest, the Qamar's son, the Kazaq, has an ominous dream. He foretells a time when Hitomi will drag the Pale Eye from the sky. For twenty-seven days, darkness rules the earth. A beast forged from the heavens and the heart of the Foul, reigns over the mortal world from the shadows. The Celestial Order spirals into ruin and, worst of all, the greatest heroes of the mortal realm do not seem to notice.

The Kazaq hurries to the mountains of the Dragon Clan to warn Hitomi, but she does not seem concerned. The Kazaq claims that, should the Naga fear this future will come to pass, they will stop her. Hitomi Kokujin incapacitates the Kazaq and uses his corrupt powers to brainwash the Naga, granting him *kikage zumi* tattoos and severing him from the Naga's akashic group mind in the process. The young Naga becomes a loyal servant of the Dragon, under Hitomi Kokujin's control.

YEAR 1131, MONTH OF THE HARE (EARLY-SPRING)

NAGA ABANDON THE CRAB

At their Qamar's command, the Naga abruptly depart from Shiro Hiruma and march north. The Crab are surprised at the sudden departure of their allies but, given the silence of the Shadowlands in recent months, do little to impede them.

KUNI YORI ATTACKS HIRUMA CASTLE

Under Kuni Yori's leadership, the Shadowlands Horde attacks Hiruma Castle. For the time being, Hida Yakamo's forces repel Yori's assaults with little difficulty, even without the Naga's aid. Yakamo does not call for reinforcements, wary that this is a mere feint to weaken the Kaiu Wall's defense.

AKUMA UNLEASHED

While exploring the ruins of an ancient Lion castle, Kitsu Okura encounters the bound spirit of the Oni Lord, Akuma.

Akuma offers Okura great power if it is released, but Okura refuses. Regardless, Okura finds himself strangely unwilling to report what he had discovered to his fellow Lion.

YEAR 1131, MONTH OF THE DRAGON (MID-SPRING)

SHINJO TASHIMA VISITS THE DRAGON LANDS

Disturbed by the rumors of the Togashi slaughter in the Dragon provinces, Shinjo Shirasu dispatches his cousin Tashima to investigate the truth of the matter. Shortly after arriving in the Dragon lands, Tashima encounters Hitomi Kokujin. Days later, Tashima sends a message back to Shirasu stating that he has seen "The Lady's Truth" and will be remaining in the Dragon provinces, learning the path of the *kikage zumi* mystics.

THE NEW JADE CHAMPION

While exploring the archives of Otosan Uchi, Imperial scribes discover the existence of the long-defunct office of Jade Champion. Chancellor Takuan decides to renew the title as a demonstration of his effective leadership. Many shugenja journey to Otosan Uchi to compete in the tournament, including Kitsu Okura of the Lion Clan.

Unfortunately, the pressure to succeed overwhelms Okura. Succumbing to the whispered temptations of kansens, Okura strikes a bargain with the Oni Lord, Akuma. With Akuma's power, Okura easily wins the tournament and assumes the role of Jade Champion. Akuma then begins a slow campaign of driving the new Jade Champion ever deeper into corruption and madness.

YEAR 1131, MONTH OF THE GOAT (MID-SUMMER)

KURO'S DISCOVERY

After studying *Norikazu's Ravings* at length, Grand Master Naka Kuro begins to sense a troubling disturbance in the elements. Suspecting that the chaotic times Norikazu foresaw are swiftly approaching, he reinforces the rites of protection on Kyuden Isawa. Shortly after he does so, Kuro's most trusted servant undergoes a terrifying change. His facial features vanish, leaving an eggshell-smooth surface, and then the servant vanishes as well. Kuro is deeply disturbed, as not even his great magical knowledge can explain what has occurred.

YORI'S SECOND ASSAULT

Kuni Yori again attacks Hiruma Castle, and again the Crab utterly crush his forces. At this point, the defenders of Hiruma Castle become fairly confident that they can defend the castle even from the assembled Shadowlands Horde. Yori escapes unharmed, satisfied with the result. As his troops are mere undead minions, he has lost nothing, but the overconfidence of the Crab will be their undoing.

THE CRANE ATTACK THE MANTIS

The Mantis begin to occupy the abandoned Scorpion lands, but face fierce resistance from the Crane. Daidoji Uji does not fully trust Yoritomo's motives, and suspects that once the Scorpion lands are secure he might turn on the Crane. Yoritomo knows that the Crane forces are not large enough to sustain a

prolonged attack or hold the Scorpion provinces without weakening the defense of their own borders, so he withdraws into Beiden Pass to fight a defensive battle and wait. After many long weeks, Uji bitterly withdraws his forces.

SIEGE OF SLEEPING MOUNTAIN

The Naga armies invade Dragon Clan lands. The Naga fight back only when engaged, but are brutal and methodical in their passage through the mountains. The Dragon likewise tenaciously defend their homes, initiating a prolonged campaign of brutal mountain warfare.

THE AGASHA LEAVE THE DRAGON

With Hitomi's activities becoming increasingly random and violent, a large number of members of the Agasha family leave the Dragon Clan in disgust. They find a welcome home within the Phoenix Clan. Shiba Tsukune even permits these Agasha to retain their family name rather than commanding them to swear fealty to the Asako or Isawa.

The daimyo of the Agasha family, Agasha Tamori, refuses to join his brethren. He maintains his loyalty to Hitomi, refusing to abandon her even in her madness.

YEAR 1131, MONTH OF THE OX (MID-WINTER)

SEDUCTION OF THE LION CLAN

Kitsu Okura falls deeper into madness, seduced by the Oni Lord Akuma's power. He begins seeking out other Lion who are dissatisfied with Tsanuri's rule of their clan and secretly initiating them as followers of Akuma. Most notable is Matsu Daoquan, brother of Matsu Goemon, one of Toturi's most celebrated allies.

YEAR 1131, MONTH OF THE MONKEY (LATE WINTER)

TSUME REBORN

On the night of a lunar eclipse, Kuni Yori enacts a perverse magical ritual. The undead general Moto Tsume, slain during the fighting on the Day of Thunder, is restored to unlife via the power of Fu Leng's skull. He immediately swears his loyalty to Yori. At his command, legions of undead Moto issue forth from Jigoku and bolster Yori's armies.

HIRUMA CASTLE PREPARES

After months of silence, Yakamo suspects that Yori will soon assault Hiruma Castle again. He sends scouts to Kyuden Hida to summon reinforcements and supplies.

None of the scouts reach their destination alive.

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE HARE (EARLY SPRING)

SIEGE OF HIRUMA CASTLE

Just as the winter snows melt, Moto Tsume and Kuni Yori lead a brutal assault against Shiro Hiruma. Legions of undead, ogres, and bakemono surround the fortress. The Crab are not prepared for this assault, yet somehow, through a combination of resourcefulness, determination, luck, and the aid of the Third Whisker Nezumi, they survive the onslaught.

Hida Yakamo knows that the Crab will not survive for long if his sister does not learn what is happening. Praying that the Jade Hand will offer him the protection he needs to survive the journey, he ventures through the Nezumi tunnels and begins a harried journey back to Kyuden Hida.

Unfortunately, Yori senses the purity of the Jade Hand and dispatches Moto Tsume to apprehend Yakamo.

THE ORACLE RETURNS

Searching for any clues as to the whereabouts of Toturi, Ginawa and Matsu Hiroru find a most unexpected ally. Isawa Kaede, once the Master of the Void, has returned to Rokugan as the Oracle of the Void. Kaede instructs them to find "a Dragon-man, whose face has not yet vanished."

STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN LION LANDS

After months of investigating strange disappearances in Lion territories, Shinjo Shirasu's magistrates confront a band of Kitsu shugenja and samurai. All of the Lion are consumed by extremely advanced Shadowlands Taint. The group fights to the death. The magistrates attempt to investigate further, but Jade Champion Kitsu Okura intervenes, claiming he will take command of the investigation. Shirasu is suspicious of Okura's true motives, but knows better than to question the authority of the Jade Champion. His magistrates withdraw from Lion territory.

WHAT'S NEW IN HIDDEN EMPEROR

NEW ANCESTORS

HIDA KISADA

Even in Rokugan, a land blessed with heroes, Hida Kisada's name is revered by many, and known to all. Kisada, commonly known as "The Great Bear" for his huge stature and ferocity in battle, distinguished himself as a cunning commander and relentless warrior in over 40 years as Champion of the Crab. The Crab Clan prospered under Kisada's leadership; he refused to allow the politics of the Empire to distract from the Crab's true duty, protecting it.

However, Kisada felt that only a unified Empire with strong leadership could ever truly defeat the Shadowlands. When Hantei the 39th proved to be a weak Emperor, incapable of quelling the nascent Clan War, Kisada decided that the protection of the Empire demanded drastic measures. He had his then-advisor, Kuni Yori, strike a pact on his behalf with the Shadowlands, to jointly invade Otsan Uchi. Kisada's plan was simple and pragmatic: with the aid of the creatures of the Shadowlands, he would quickly conquer the capital, then call upon the combined might of the Great Clans to crush the threat forever. Kisada's plan was strategically sound, but Destiny would intervene.

The Crab easily swept through the lands of the Crane, and routed the Lion defenders of Otsan Uchi in short order.

Kisada personally led the assault upon the palace, and confronted the Emperor. By that point, Fu Leng's possession of Hantei was complete, and the Dark God fought the Great Bear in personal combat. Although Kisada's prowess in battle was legendary, he was not the equal of Fu Leng. Their conflict ended when Fu Leng impaled Kisada on the Ancestral Sword of the Hantei.

Kisada's immense fortitude allowed him to survive the terrible wound Fu Leng inflicted upon him, and Kisada's son, Yakamo, dragged him to safety. Although Kisada was crippled by his injuries and had to turn over active leadership of the Crab to Yakamo, he continued to serve as a military advisor to the Crab and the Empire, where he played a major role in the planning and logistic preparations for the second Day of Thunder. When he finally died in the year 1130, Kisada was named Fortune of Persistence by Emperor Toturi I. Kisada has taken a very active role in guiding his descendants since his death.

WILL OF THE BEAR

You possess a portion of Hida Kisada's drive to succeed, no matter how great the challenge.

Ancestor: Hida Kisada

Clan: Crab

Benefit: If you fail a Skill Check for a task but try again, the DC penalty for repeated attempts is waived. Repeat attempts still consume the normal amount of time and materials.

Ancestor: Hida Kisada

(4 points)

You share in the persistence of your esteemed ancestor. Whenever you are engaged in any task where brute, unrelenting effort would be helpful (GM's decision, but typically anything where someone could do a better job by working harder or longer hours), you may add your Willpower to your Skill and/or Attribute roll.

NEW ITEMS

KITSUKI KAAGI'S JOURNAL

Kitsuki Kaagi was a Kitsuki Magistrate, active in the years preceding the Scorpion Clan Coup, who specialized in pursuing investigations with bizarre, unusual, or supernatural overtones. Like all magistrates of his family, Kaagi regularly recorded his investigations, thoughts, and experiences in a collection of scrolls, collectively known as a journal. Many of his earlier, more mundane chronicles are safely stored within Kyuden Kitsuki, but the logs of his final, tragic investigations into the Lying Darkness bear both a trace of his inquisitive nature and the Fate that eventually befell him.

When Kaagi realized that he was slowly being consumed by the Lying Darkness, he sent his Journal via messenger to Kyuden Kitsuki, hoping that his fellow Dragons could put the insights he had gleaned to use against it. However, the Journal was also touched by the Darkness; even as readers perused its contents, learning of its nature and identity, the Darkness gained a foothold into the reader's mind. Even though the Kitsuki were very methodical, and took careful precautions

while reading the Journal, they could find no way to prevent the Darkness from consuming those who read the Journal. Ultimately, they sealed the Journal away within a vault in Kyuden Kitsuki, where it was interred for years.

As Hitomi began examining Shosuro, in the crystal chamber deep within Kyuden Togashi, agents of the Darkness stole the Journal from Kyuden Kitsuki, substituting a blank duplicate in its stead. By the time the Kitsuki were aware that the Journal was in circulation, mostly through rumors of incidents similar to those Kaagi encountered a generation ago, it was far too late to track the Journal down.

Kitsuki Kaagi's Journal consists of a collection of scrolls, sealed within a sturdy but mundane scroll case. In addition to Kaagi's keen observations and deductions contained in the journal entries, reading the Journal provides the reader with intuitive, instinctive insights into the nature, powers, and threats of the Lying Darkness. However, this knowledge comes at a terrible price; the Lying Darkness gains similar insights into the character reading the Journal, insights it is eager to use against him.

Kitsuki Kaagi's Journal is divided into 4 chapters, each covering one of Kaagi's final investigations, inside a sealed box. Written on the front of the box in shaky calligraphy is the phrase "do not read this." Although the Journal appears mundane, it is part of the Lying Darkness, and merely possessing it will draw the attention of the Darkness and its minions (or the Shadow Dragon and its minions after the Darkness is defeated).

A character who reads a chapter of the Journal immediately gains a single Shadow Point, but permanently gains a +1 Insight bonus into any Knowledge (Lying Darkness), Knowledge (Ninja), or similar Skill or Ability check relating to the Lying Darkness (not including Attack and Damage rolls). This bonus increases by a further +1 for each additional chapter the character reads, to a maximum of +4. However, the amount of Shadow Points gained for each successive chapter increases, as follows:

2nd Chapter: +3 Points

3rd Chapter: +5 Points

4th Chapter: +1 Rank

The Journal does not directly compel readers to continue, but the character will not be aware of the Shadow Points gained until outside forces, such as minions of the Darkness tempting him, draw attention to his affliction.

Note for campaigns occurring after the Darkness is defeated: a character may make a Knowledge (Lying Darkness) check at DC 20 (or Knowledge (Ninja) check at DC 30) to recognize the Journal and the danger it represents.

A character who reads a chapter of the Journal immediately gains a single Shadow Point, but permanently gains a Free Raise for any Lore: Lying Darkness, Lore: Ninja, or similar Skill, Ring, or Trait check relating

to the Lying Darkness (not including Attack and Damage rolls). This bonus increases by a further Raise for each additional chapter the character reads, to a maximum of four. However, the amount of Shadow Points gained for each successive chapter increases, as follows:

2nd Chapter: +1 Point

3rd Chapter: +2 Points

4th Chapter: +3 Points

The Journal does not directly compel readers to continue, but the character will not be aware of the Shadow Points gained until outside forces, such as minions of the Darkness tempting him, draw attention to his affliction.

Note for campaigns occurring after the Darkness is defeated: a character may make a Lore: Lying Darkness check at TN 20 (or Lore: Ninja check at TN 30) to recognize the Journal and the danger it represents

NEW KIHŌ

In the years immediately succeeding the second Day of Thunder, Rokugan experienced a spiritual enlightenment. Monks, shugenja, and other mystics, galvanized by the victory of mortal men over Fu Leng, learned to harness their chi in innovative ways. This resulted in the development of several new kiho.

HEART OF SUITENGU

One of the more ubiquitous discoveries of the new age stemmed from a practical need: in order to be able to continually research new kiho, monks needed a way to rapidly replenish their reserves of chi. The Heart of Suitengu kiho was developed to allow monks to recuperate quickly after exerting themselves.

HEART OF SUITENGU

(KIHO FEAT)

Prerequisites: 1 level of monk, inkyo, or shugenja, Void Use

Benefit: Once per day, by taking 1 hour to meditate and spending a Void Point, you may select one Class Feature that has a limited number of uses per day (other than Spells and Spell Use); your number of uses refreshes as though you had spent a complete day of rest.

HEART OF SUITENGU

(WATER KIHŌ)

Type: Aiki

Mastery: 3

The Heart of Suitengu kiho has two effects: The first is that, while this kiho is active, the user only needs to spend 5 minutes meditating to switch from one Aiki or Kharmic kiho to another, and does not need to spend a Void point to do so. The second is that, once per day, by spending an hour in meditation, the monk gains an additional Void Point that may only be used to pay the cost of activating a kiho.

SOUL OF THE RAGING STORM

After Toturi's disappearance, many conflicts erupted across the Empire. The kiho that eventually would become known as Soul of the Raging Storm evolved from basic shugenja wards and the martial disciplines practiced by many monks. Flee the Darkness allows its users a final attempt to ward off incoming attacks by focusing their chi into a momentary defense.

SOUL OF THE RAGING STORM

(KIHO FEAT)

Prerequisites: Dodge, Expertise, Base Attack Bonus +4

Benefit: Whenever a physical attack or spell that requires a to-hit roll targets you and you are aware of it, you may spend a Void Point to immediately receive a +4 bonus to your AC for the duration of the attack. You may do this even if you are flatfooted or otherwise denied your Dex bonus to your AC, but must declare your intent to use this kiho before the Attack dice are rolled.

SOUL OF THE RAGING STORM

(AIR KIHŌ)

Type: Zanshin

Mastery: 4

A monk who has mastered Soul of the Raging Storm is always prepared to defend himself. Whenever you are attacked, before the dice are rolled but after the attacker has declared any raises, you may spend a Void Point to increase your TN to be hit by 10. This Kiho can also be used against any spell which is aimed or targeted, increasing the TN of the spell by 10.

NEW PATHS, SCHOOLS, AND TECHNIQUES

THE ASAHINA ARCHERS

Even though the Crane Clan prefers to resolve disputes in the courts or through Iaijutsu Duels, they sometimes need to settle conflicts through force of arms. While at war, the Clan relies heavily upon the guerrilla tactics of the Daidoji, to weaken opposing armies. However, once the skirmishing is finished and the battle joined, the Crane often find themselves at a serious disadvantage against the veteran units of the Crab or the legendary leadership of the Lion.

Long before the Asahina Battle School was founded (see *Way of the Shugenja*), the Asahina family needed to find a way for those who either lacked the capability to commune with the kami or the pacifist mentality required to study at its shugenja school to serve the Clan. Likewise, the Daidoji recognized that they needed a force to fill the niche between the highly unorthodox Daidoji Harriers and their more conventional forces. The development of formal archer units was a natural outgrowth of the sensibilities of both families; even

the martially inclined Asahina had no particular desire to be physically close to the victims of their violence, while the Daidoji had an affinity for any tool that could weaken a foe before he could retaliate.

Prior to the War Against the Darkness, the Asahina and Daidoji jointly maintained a school for their archers, who trained in a small kyuden near the border of the Asahina and Daidoji estates. Although Asahina Archers served in some capacity during most of the wars involving the Crane, their role was often understated. Ironically, the first time the Asahina Archers played a pivotal role in a war was against other members of the Crane Clan.

The Asahina Archers were mobilized during the War, initially to reinforce the Daidoji garrisons defending the major Crane holdings. When the Lying Darkness manipulated Daidoji Uji into attacking Shiro no Yojin, then held by the Lion Clan, he enlisted the majority of the Archers to assist in his siege of the castle. Uji succeeded in capturing Shiro no Yojin, only to find that Doji Kuwanan, Champion of the Crane, had disavowed all knowledge of Uji's actions, and had declared war upon Uji and his followers. Under pressure from both Lion and Crane, Uji resorted to extreme measures to preserve his command, including unleashing the Daidoji Harriers and Asahina Archers against his kin during several brutal engagements.

Eventually, Kuwanan and Uji discovered that the Crane Civil War had been instigated by the Darkness and ceased their conflict. By that time, many casualties had been inflicted on both sides, crippling the Crane forces. The Asahina Archers had acquitted themselves amply, but were horrified by the amount of damage they inflicted upon their own Clan. In the years since the War Against the Darkness, the Archers swore to never again take arms against another Crane, an oath that led them into conflict with Doji Kurohito during the War Against the Spirits.

Pressed severely by Hantei XVI's forces, Kurohito ordered the Archers to take the field against Hantei's armies, an order that the Archers refused to follow, leading to the seppuku of their senior senseis and the disgrace of the School. Since Toturi's victory over the forces of the Steel Chrysanthemum, the Archers have once again been relegated to support roles in the Crane armies, where they still serve diligently, waiting for an opportunity to show that they can serve the Crane as well as any bushi.

ASAHINA ARCHER (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Hit Die: d8

Requirements: To qualify to become an Asahina Archer, a character must fulfill the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +8.

Hide: 8 ranks.

Move Silently: 8 ranks.

Spot: 6 ranks.

Feats: Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Shot on the Run.

Weapon Focus: Yumi.

Special: The character must swear an oath never to take up arms against the Crane Clan.

Class Skills: The Asahina Archer's class skills (and key abilities for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climbing (Str), Hide (Dex), Jumping (Str), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points per Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES:

All of the following are class features of the Asahina Archer Prestige Class.

Weapon & Armor Proficiency: Asahina Archers gain no additional weapon or armor proficiencies for joining this Prestige Class. Armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Locks, and Tumble.

Note that the special class abilities of the Asahina Archer (other than the Bonus Feats) can only be performed with a Yumi.

Ranged Sneak Attack: Asahina Archers are taught to strike from hiding and maximize their effectiveness against much larger, less mobile forces. Beginning at 2nd level, the archer gains a damage bonus on all ranged attacks made from hiding. This ability functions exactly as the Rogue class special ability of the same name, except that it may only apply to ranged attacks with a Yumi and is limited to a range of 60 feet rather than 30 feet. This bonus damage increases from 1d6 to 2d6 at 4th level.

Bonus Feat: at 1st and 4th level, the Archer gains an additional Feat, which must be chosen from the following list: Dodge, Endurance, Improved Critical (Yumi only), Improved Initiative, Run

Swifter Arrow: Asahina Archers are masters of attrition, specializing in suppressing the enemy's ability to fight back. The Archer receives an extra attack with his Yumi at the end of each round (at his highest attack bonus), that can only be used upon an enemy who attempted to attack the Archer with a throwing or missile weapon during the round.

No Regrets: The Asahina Archers are charged with reducing the number of foes the Crane armies must face upon the battlefield, and are taught to spare no time reflecting once their arrows are loosed and their targets' deaths are assured. At 5th level, an Asahina Archer gains the Great Cleave Feat, only usable at range with their Yumi rather than in melee combat, without needing to meet the other prerequisites.

THE ASAHINA ARCHERS (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 3

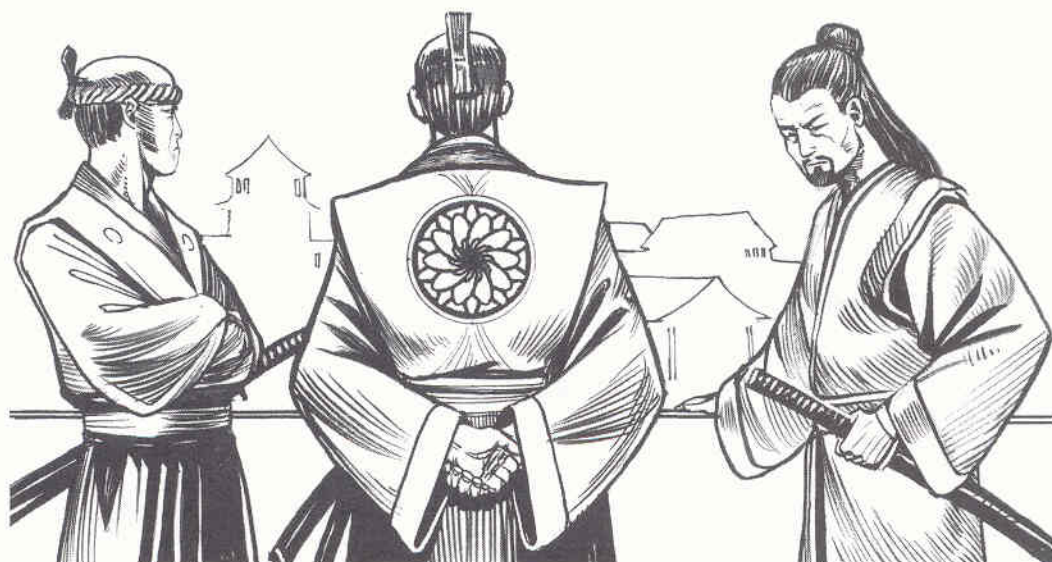
Path of Entry: Daidoji Yojimbo or Daidoji Harrier 2

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at Rank 3

Special: must take a 2-pt Obligation (never take up arms against any member of the Crane Clan)

TABLE 1-1: THE ASAHINA ARCHER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+2	+0	Bonus Feat
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+0	Range Sneak Attack +1d6
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+1	Swifter Arrow
4th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Ranged Sneak Attack +2d6, Bonus Feat
5th	+3	+4	+4	+1	No Regrets



Technique: No Regrets: The Asahina Archers are trained to suppress the innate pacifism of their family, to focus on the lives they save through the lives they take. When firing a Yumi, if the Archer kills an opponent with an attack, he may immediately make an additional attack at a different target, to a maximum of double his normal attacks per turn.

sorely needed. As the Crab appreciate action as much as gesture, any samurai who assist in this critical task can expect gratitude from the Crab.

RECLAIMING THE LAND

This adventure hook works best if at least one member of the group is aligned to the Crab Clan or is personally allied with the Crab, or if at least one member of the group is a courtier or trader who deals in weapons, jade, or food.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

With the departure of the Naga from Shiro Hiruma, the Crab forces remaining in the castle badly need re-supply. Although the Nezumi have agreed to transport food and weapons to their old allies, the Ratlings do not have a surplus of their own to donate. Supplies need to be transported from the Crab estates to the Nezumi, so the latter can sneak them past the Shadowlands lines to Shiro Hiruma.

FOCUS

The vast majority of the Crab's resources have already been committed to the effort to retake Shiro Hiruma, so they are aggressively lobbying the other Great Clans for aid. They are calling in old debts and offering future services for any form of substantial aid. This represents a wonderful opportunity to get in the good graces of the Hida.

STRIKE

In addition to being short on supplies, the Crab are desperately short on soldiers experienced in navigating the Shadowlands. The convoys delivering supplies to the Nezumi need to be protected. Likewise, additional bushi to accompany the Nezumi during the final, most dangerous stage of transfer — sneaking past the Shadowlands forces to the castle itself — are

HITOMI'S WRATH

This adventure hook works best if one or more members of the group are members of the Dragon Clan or the Brotherhood of Shinsei, or are courtiers with a history of dealing with the laws of the Empire.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

After assuming the mantle of Dragon Champion, Hitomi has begun a systematic purge, permitting only those who swear loyalty to her to remain in the Dragon Clan. Although all the families of the Clan have been affected by her vehemence, the Togashi are particularly hard-hit. They have been offered three choices: swear fealty to Hitomi, forsake their past, or be slain. Many members of the Dragon Clan and most of the Togashi family have begun to search for ways to escape the Clan and Hitomi's ire.

FOCUS

For much of the Clan, the situation is not as simple as "staying" or "leaving." Oaths of fealty bind them, and even though Hitomi is making particularly strident demands, they are still within her mandate as Champion. However, it is obvious to many within the Clan that Hitomi is unstable, particularly given her treatment of the Togashi. Anybody who can provide the reluctant with an honorable way to distance themselves from Hitomi's leadership, or who can assist the Togashi refugees who are fleeing the Clan, will receive the personal gratitude of those they aid.

STRIKE

Those who get involved in the situation will be subject to criticism from all sides. Although it is difficult to ignore the suffering of the Dragon Clan, assisting those leaving the Clan is also technically assisting deserters. Additionally, there are many in the Dragon, particularly among the Mirumoto and

the newly-fledged Hitomi family, who see the situation as a matter of honor and are willing to back up their convictions with violence. Even if a character wishes to remain neutral in the inter-Clan conflict the Dragon could certainly use the assistance of a facilitator; a difficult path to balance but one that could spare a great deal of bloodshed.

Note: This hook can easily be adapted to later in the War Against the Darkness, as the Agasha family flees to the Phoenix.

SAVING THE TAO

This adventure hook works best if at least one member of the group is a member, indebted to, or controlled by the Kolat, or if at least one member of the group is linked to or Tainted by the Lying Darkness.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

The Kolat have access to hidden information that few other organizations possess. They are one of the first groups to realize that the Lying Darkness is active in the Empire, and realize the danger it poses. One of the Darkness' first targets is likely to be the New Tao, the transcription of the conversation between Toturi and the Hooded Ronin, transcribed by Isawa Osugi. If the Darkness can consume that, a great deal of Shinsei's wisdom shall be lost to the Empire.

FOCUS

Saving the Tao will not be easy; even before the Kolat began to act, the Darkness quietly consumed many of the copies of the New Tao across the Empire. The last copy to be consumed will be the True, original Tao, preserved within the Palace of Otosan Uchi, protected by the Imperial Guard. However, samurai offer little protection against the Lying Darkness, and the Tao must be saved.

STRIKE

The Kolat are unwilling to reveal themselves in order to save the Tao — their exposure would cost the organization greatly, and the Empire would react with hostility rather than gratitude. Additionally, the disappearance of the Tao would cause uproar within the Empire, and prematurely alert the Darkness to the fact that it has an enemy. Saving the Tao will require not only its theft from the capital, but its replacement with a newly written copy. Even with the assistance of Isawa Osugi, who as the original writer is the only person remaining who could write a new copy, rescuing the new Tao will require sneaking into and out of the Palace, a task that promises a shameful death for those who are captured.

THE TEST OF THE JADE CHAMPION

This adventure hook works best if the group contains at least one shugenja and/or one courtier of a Clan or family known for its shugenja.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

With the disappearance of Toturi and the increasing unrest in Rokugan, the Imperial Court has decided to reinstitute the office of Jade Champion, to rally the Empire and increase support for their provisional government. This will require a great deal of logistic and planning work, as all the Clans must be notified and arrangements made for the tournament and its venue.

FOCUS

The office of Jade Champion was originally dissolved at the request of the Phoenix Clan, who felt that it infringed upon their mandate as the guardians of magic within the Empire. With the Phoenix still severely weakened due to the Clan War, they are unable to fill this niche. Nonetheless, the return of a Jade Champion represents a very public refutation of the Phoenix, and the court does not wish to alienate a Great Clan while the Emperor is missing.

STRIKE

Players can be involved in this hook from several vantages. A great deal of negotiation and politicking will be occurring in and around the tournament, to salve egos and to select entrants. Likewise, some might wish to participate in the tournament itself — winning would bring tremendous prestige, Glory, and Status to the winner and his Clan. After the tournament, the selection of Jade Magistrates and other prominent support positions must also be made; all of these represent opportunities to both earn and expend favors.

MAGISTERIAL PRIVILEGE

This adventure hook works best if one or more members of the party are magistrates.

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

With the disappearance of the former Emerald Champion, Kakita Toshimoko, the Emerald Magistrates have been left leaderless and unfocused. The senior Magistrate, Shinjo Shirasu, has been elevated to the role of acting head of the organization, but this appointment has left considerable ill-will between the Clans, who resent that the Unicorn have taken a dominant role in interpreting and enforcing the laws of the Empire.

FOCUS

Any peacekeeping or facilitating efforts on the part of the PCs will be complicated by the fact that many conflicts are beginning between various factions of the Empire: the Dragon and the Brotherhood of Shinsei are at odds, and the Crane have attacked the Lion at Shiro Yojin. While Toshimoko wielded a certain amount of authority because he made a point of distancing himself from promoting Crane interests, Shirasu is unproven in his role, and the Clans are becoming more distrustful of the Emerald Magistrates as a result.



STRIKE

Complicating matters further, the Lying Darkness is attempting to actively promote war and distrust between the Clans, weakening the Empire. If the players become successful at reducing or quelling inter-Clan warfare, they are likely to draw the attention of the Darkness, which will try to subvert or destroy them.

IMPORTANT NPCs

KITSU OKURA, JADE CHAMPION

Kitsu Okura knows, deep in his soul, that what he has done is more than merely dishonorable, it is simply wrong. For him, there shall be no hope, no redemption, and ultimately no honor in his future. His crime — summoning, entreating, and bargaining with the legendary Oni Overlord Akuma — is so large that there is no hope of concealing it, or evading its consequences. Someday soon, Kitsu Okura's soul will be forfeited to Akuma, and the Empire will suffer for Okura's crimes. Okura is deeply sorry for what he has done, and wishes he never struck his pact with Akuma.

However, if Okura was given the opportunity to make his choice again, he would do exactly the same thing. The Empire is in turmoil with the disappearance of Emperor Toturi, and the Lion Clan is beset by challenges from without and within. Okura fears that not even the might of the Lion can prevail against the chaos engulfing the Empire, not without some backing from the Imperial Court, an organization that is barely able to keep the Empire running, let alone assist individual Clans. For the Lion to survive, they need to wield more authority than they currently do; having the Jade Champion hail from the Lion will give them far more political clout with which to negotiate.

While the samurai of the Lion are renowned for their prowess-at-arms, their shugenja, while skilled, are no match for those of the Phoenix or Dragon. The few Lion shugenja, such as Kitsu daimyo Kitsu Toju, who possessed the skill necessary to win the Test of the Jade Champion, simply had other duties to fulfill for the Clan. Okura was chosen to represent the Lion not based upon the hope that he would prevail, but merely so that he could put up a decent showing. Nobody, least of all his kin, expected him to win.

The low expectations of his peers was no great shock to Okura, who, while limited in his skills as a shugenja, possessed a good-deal of self-awareness. Throughout his youth and his studies, he had to grapple with the knowledge that even though he desperately wanted to achieve something for his Clan, his limited ability to call the kami forever consigned him to mediocrity. Even Kitsu Motso, who did not even possess the ability to speak with the ancestors, had achieved more fame within the Kitsu family. Okura, for many years, lacked both the ability and the opportunity to show that his heart was as fierce as any Lion's.

While exploring an abandoned castle at the edge of Lion lands, he discovered the trapped essence of the Oni Lord, Akuma. Okura could have gained great prestige for reporting the creature's presence, or even greater prestige for destroying it himself. Instead, he did nothing...

Once he discovered that he would represent the Lion at the Test, Okura threw himself into preparations. He studied every spell, practiced every ritual, pored over every scroll in the Kitsu libraries, but knew that this was insufficient. Okura spent hours in the libraries, looking up obscure and forgotten records, trying to find some way to bring victory to the Lion. As time elapsed and success eluded him, Okura began to hear the whispers of the Oni Lord in the back of his mind.

"I can help you," it said. "Together we can win."

Okura was reluctant at first, but Akuma promised that he did not want to take Okura's name for himself — as oni were wont to do. Eventually, the two came to an agreement. Akuma no Oni was surprisingly willing to enter into a pact with Okura. The Oni offered Okura the knowledge and power the latter needed to win the Jade Championship, in exchange for Okura binding himself to Akuma, initiating others within the Kitsu in the secrets of maho and the Shadowlands, and swearing upon his honor as a Lion not to take his own life. Okura agreed, and the deal was struck.

With Akuma's backing, Okura stunned all observers at the Test of the Jade Championship, besting Iuchi Karasu in the final round. Since then, he has organized the Jade Magistrates, unifying the various Clans of the Empire in their opposition to Jigoku. He has also fulfilled his end of the bargain — the Kitsu Tombs are now the home of vile rituals and devotions to Fu Leng, helping the Lion to hold its own against the Crane and other foes. Okura knows that this is an illusion, and that soon Fu Leng will claim all of Okura's followers, much like Akuma will claim the Jade Champion. He just hopes that he and the rest of his family can hang on long enough for the rest of the Lion and the Empire to rally.

KITSU OKURA, JADE CHAMPION

Male Human Lion Shu10: CR10 Medium-size humanoid; HD 10d6+30 (70hp); Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16(11 touch, 15 flat-footed) Attack +10 melee (1d6+4, +3 wakizashi) SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (Ancestors) (Family Bonus), Sense Kami; AL LE; Honor: 1.0; Glory: 4.0 Status: 8.0; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +10; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 14; Taint 0.5; Height 5 ft 8 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami), Bluff +6, Concentration +11, Knowledge (etiquette) +8, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +8, Knowledge (ancestors) +10, Knowledge (Lion Clan) +10, Knowledge (law) +10, Knowledge (maho) +10, Knowledge (Shintao) +10, Profession (scribe) +10, Scry +9, Search +7, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +10, Spot +7, Tea Ceremony +7, Combat Casting, Iron Will, Kitsu Blood, Versatile (Bluff, Search, Sense Motive, Spot), Void Use Spells Known (6/7/7/6/5/3); Base DC 12+spell level; Elemental Focus — Water; Kitsu School; 0—Detect Magic, Purify Food and Drink, Moment of Peace, Summon Water, Commune with Elements, Summon, Read Magic, Mending, Mage Hand, Know Direction; 1st—Remove Fear, Castle of Water, Detect Taint, Bless, Cure Light Wounds, Magic Weapon; 2nd—Lesser Restoration, Locate Object, Remove Paralysis, Bull's Strength, Hold person; 3rd—Remove Curse, Remove Disease, Invisibility, Magic Circle Against Taint; 4th—Neutralize Poison, Restoration, Discern Lies; 5th—Summon Nature's Ally V, Summon Monster V.

Possessions of Note: +5 Bracers of Armor, +3 wakizashi, Ring of Freedom of Movement

KITSU OKURA, JADE CHAMPION

Earth: 4

Willpower: 5

Water: 5

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Void: 4

School/Rank: Kitsu Shugenja 4

Honor: 1.0 (appears to be 3.0)

Glory: 4.0

Status: 8.0

Taint: 0.5

Advantages: Half-Blood Kitsu Ancestry, Social Position (Jade Champion)

Disadvantages: Dark Fate, Dark Secret (Pact with Akuma no Oni)

Spells: Sense, Commune, Summon, Jade Strike, Hands of Clay, Minor Binding, Grounding Energy, Evil Ward, Wings of Fire, Path to Inner Peace, Fires From Within, By the Light of Lord Moon, Matsu's Fury, Summon Oni. Additionally, as the Jade Champion, Okura can requisition any non-Clan secret spell, given advance notice and need.

Skills: Calligraphy 6, Etiquette 4, Heraldry 5, History: Ancestors 5, History: Lion Clan 5, Investigation 5, Kenjutsu 4, Lore: Maho 6, Lore: Shugenja: 4 Meditation 5, Sincerity 4, Shintao 3, Tea Ceremony 4

TAKUAN, IMPERIAL REGENT

Takuan is a samurai who has successfully navigated many trials in his life. He has fought battles, led troops, even walked away from a dishonorable master and lived the life of a ronin. He has seen difficult times, and has survived and even flourished where others would have fallen. However, he fears that his current duties are beyond even his capabilities.

As a young Crane fresh from his gempukku, Takuan was assigned guard duty on a Daidoji caravan. When Takuan later discovered his lord Daidoji Kichibei was using the caravan as cover for an opium smuggling cartel, he sought a more honorable lord within the Crane to whom he could report his findings. Kichibei manufactured false evidence and testimony suggesting that Takuan had embezzled from the caravan, ruining the young bushi's reputation. Officially, Takuan was expelled from the Daidoji for his dishonorable behavior.

Takuan knows the truth — he left of his own choice.

Even though life as a ronin was difficult, he enjoyed the freedom it provided. He discovered a purity to the life as a wave man, one he never encountered serving under Kichibei. Takuan wandered the Empire for some time serving various Clans, houses, and employers. He learned courage from the Crab, resourcefulness from the Unicorn, and humility from the Suzume. For four years, he was the headman of Nanashi Mura, and learned leadership. Then, he met Toturi, and learned devotion.

The campaigns where he served under Toturi are some of Takuan's fondest memories. Takuan rose through the ranks, including an extended stint as one of Toturi's chief military advisors and even serving for a time as a leader of the legendary Twelve Ronin. Toturi's grasp of both tactics and human nature made him an able commander, but Takuan admires Toturi's humility and willingness to give all individuals a chance to show their mettle, regardless of station. During the Clan War, Takuan would have gladly given his life for Toturi.

With Toturi missing, Takuan has found that he can better serve his former commander by continuing to serve as Imperial Regent until the Emperor can be found. Takuan was intrigued when Toturi first offered him the position, seeing it as very similar to the role he played in Nanashi Mura, only on a larger scale. Even though this position entailed learning new skills, Takuan adapted with the same vigor he applied to all challenges. Although he was somewhat unpolished compared to the courtiers he worked with, none could dispute that he would soon be fully qualified as Regent.

Toturi's disappearance has shifted the requirements of his post considerably. Whereas before, Takuan was tasked with carrying out the Emperor's wishes, he now needs to not only implement the decisions made by the Imperial Court, he needs to keep the Court together and the Clans at peace. Takuan is a good man, and skilled warrior, but he is not yet ready for this task.

But there is no one else available that Takuan trusts to fill Toturi's wishes. Many have stepped forward to assist Takuan in running the Empire, most notably Kakita Yoshi, but all of them have the interests of their Clans at heart. Takuan, although he does not see all of the political nuances Toturi did, realizes that the Empire needs to be unified, and that even the appearance of favoritism is something he cannot afford right now. So he struggles with his duties, hoping to hold Rokugan together until such time as he is ready to direct it as Regent, or until Toturi is found.

Takuan feels some guilt over Toturi's disappearance, perceiving Palace security as one of his duties even though the two were no longer on military campaign. The Regent would like nothing more than to take up his blade, like his old comrades-in-arms Dairy, Ginawa, and Hiroru, and personally take up the search for the Emperor, but realizes that Toturi would want him where he is now. If Takuan cannot help find the Emperor, he will make sure that Toturi has a healthy, vibrant Empire to return to.

TAKUAN, IMPERIAL REGENT

Male Ronin (formerly Daidoji) Human; Sam13, Courtier 1: CR14; Medium-size humanoid; HD 13d10+52 + 1d6+4(150hp); Init +6; Spd 20 ft; AC 25 (15 touch, 20 flat-footed); Attack +21/+16/+11 melee (1d10+9, +4 keen katana), +20/+15/+10 ranged (1d8+5, +3 mighty yumi); SQ Hide — Class Skill (Family Bonus), Ancestral Daisho, Talent, Style & Grace; AL LG; Honor: 2.5; Glory: 4.0; Status: 8.0; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +12; Str 17, Dex 15 (18), Con 18, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 14; Height 5 ft 10 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Battle +17, Bluff +6, Iaijutsu Focus +17, Innuendo +6, Diplomacy +12, Handle Animal +8, Knowledge +11, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +11, Ride +14, Sense Motive +12, Swim +9, Cleave, Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Great Cleave, Righteous Fury, Daisho Specialization (katana), The Sudden Strike (katana), Toku's Lesson, Way of the Crane, Weapon Focus (katana), Void Use

Possessions of Note: +4 keen katana (ancestral daisho), +4 keen wakizashi (ancestral daisho), +5 lamellar armor of heavy fortification, mighty +3 yumi, light warhorse, gloves of dexterity +3.

TAKUAN, IMPERIAL REGENT

Earth: 5

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Daidoji Bodyguard 1, Eyes of Nanashi 1, Toturi 1, Otomo Seiyaku 1 (Insight Rank 5)

Honor: 2.5

Glory: 4.0

Status: 8.0 (Imperial Regent)

Advantages: Allies (Imperial Court, Nanashi Mura), Inheritance (Armor of Sun Tao), Multiple Schools, Social Position (Imperial Regent), True Friend (Mirumoto Taki)

Disadvantages: Obligation (Nanashi Mura), Idealistic

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 7, Commerce 5, Courtier 4, Defense 4, Diplomacy 6, Horsemanship 4, Hunting 3, Iaijutsu 5, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kuenai 5, Kenjutsu 7, Kyujutsu 3, Law 5, Lore: Shadowlands 4

CULT OF THE
DESTROYER, ACT
I: A QUIET DEATH

"Beyond Rokugan, there exist horrors beyond imagining. There are other dark gods than Fu Leng, some possessed of cruelty and hatred that no samurai can fathom."

— Ide Tamoko, Unicorn Clan Historian

The Cult of the Destroyer is an adventure in six parts that takes place across the face of Rokugan during the era of the Empire's epic War Against the Darkness. In each chapter, you will find an installment of this adventure that relates in some way to the events of the period covered in that chapter. These adventures are intended to be played as a campaign, but they may also be used individually with only minor modifications if that suits your group's needs.

SYNOPSIS

The characters are contacted as they are staying in a city within their lord's domain. The discreet inquiry is from an Otomo visitor to their lord's court. Although the matter has been kept quiet, both the courtier's yojimbo have been violently murdered in their sleep. This is obviously a concern to the courtier, who fears further violence against his person, and to the characters' lord, who wishes to avenge the dishonor of having Seppun guardsmen killed while visiting his domain.

The Otomo wishes the characters to inquire after the reclusive scholar Seppun Horiken, a cousin of one of the murdered men. The yojimbo in question had returned from visiting his cousin only two days previously, and the Otomo has concerns that the visit may be linked to the murder in some way. The matter needs to be handled quickly and quietly, and the characters' lord has assured the Otomo that they are perfectly suited for such a task.

The characters find the scholar, but are too late to prevent his murder. The man's humble home has been ransacked and partially burned, but some documents survive. In the ruins, the characters discover clues leading to a Mantis Clan merchant house in their lord's home city. They travel back and confront the assassin, but find more questions in the aftermath of their victory.

SCENE ONE: A FAVOR
FOR AN IMPERIAL

This adventure's opening scene is left deliberately vague so that individual GMs can incorporate it into their campaigns as seamlessly as possible. Depending on where it takes place, the hooks at the end may need to be changed to reflect the setting's geographical location. Any existing Otomo character from a campaign can be utilized in this adventure, although for convenience this writing makes use of Otomo Banu, a survivor from the Clan War era who has found a somewhat less influential position among Toturi's court.

The characters receive a sealed letter, delivered by a servant. The letter may be delivered to an individual, but instructions accompanying the scroll request that the group be assembled when it is opened. The scroll bears the mon of the Otomo family, easily recognizable to most samurai (Heraldry roll, TN 10/Knowledge (nobility & royalty), DC 15). The letter contains a discreet invitation for the characters to meet with the writer at a small shrine just outside the city. There is no name attached, and the scroll contains no personal chop or even that of a particular family branch, but the Otomo family mon should be sufficient initiative for most characters.

Assuming that the characters follow through, they arrive at a small shrine to Jurojin, the Fortune of Longevity (although the shrine's patron can be changed to something more suitable for the campaign). Read the following:

The quiet of early morning seems to have settled over the shrine like a shroud. Even at this hour, there are normally adherents and monks in attendance at most shrines, even those as small as this one. A half-dozen samurai clad in nondescript brown robes are spaced out along the shrine's perimeter in an almost casual manner, although their body language hardly seems relaxed. When you approach, one bows briefly and gestures to the shrine behind him. "Banu-sama is expecting you."

Characters may wish to attempt a roll for information on Banu. With a successful Courtier/Knowledge (nobility & royalty) roll (TN15/DC15), any character can recall that Banu was something of a power player in the Imperial Court up to the beginning of the Clan War. After that, he found his power and influence substantially diminished when Toturi took the throne, although the present power vacuum has seen him rise in stature. In any event, he is a high-ranking Otomo, and certainly not the sort of man the characters would wish to upset. When the party enters the shrine, read the following:

A man sits alone within the shrine, kneeling before the altar in supplication. His robes are nondescript, like those worn by the guards outside. Despite his apparent desire to remain unnoticed, there is a small Otomo mon on the right shoulder of his robes. Whether through pride or arrogance, Otomo Banu refuses to conceal his allegiance.

Banu turns and glances at you over his shoulder, a polite but weak smile on his features. "Join me if you please, my friends. I have matters I would discuss with you." He turns back to the altar, closing his eyes in thought. "Before we begin," he adds, "I have the assurances of your lord that you are samurai that can be trusted to act with speed, skill, and discretion. That which I would discuss with you should be kept quiet, for the good of my family." He turns to face you once again. "Naturally, I would not ask you to perform any dishonorable acts in my name. Your silence, however, would be a great favor to me and to the Otomo."

Banu will answer no questions until the characters agree to his conditions. Assuming the characters have no objections, Banu will continue. Read the following:

"You may or may not be aware of the rumors circulating among your lord's court over the past few days," Banu begins. "My sudden withdrawal from events there has sparked many rumors. Some believe your lord has offended me, while others think I was the offender, and he has banished me from his sight." The courtier shakes his head sadly. "Unfortunately, the truth is somewhat more gruesome." Banu rises and folds his hands in his sleeves, pacing between the altar and you. Clearly, his consternation has done nothing to change his love of an audience. "Three nights ago, both my yojimbo were murdered in their sleep. I did not say assassinated, for this was no subtle act. They were brutalized, their bodies cut in a ritualistic fashion that your lord's most trusted and capable shugenja have never seen before." He pauses again, this time less for dramatic effect than before. His expression seems genuinely remorseful. "Junichi and Oronoko were two of the finest bushi I have ever known. Both were Seppun, and well trained. This death was beneath them."

Banu seems to recover his wits, and continues. "One week before her death, Oronoko returned from a short leave of duty to visit a cousin of hers, a man named Seppun Horiken. Horiken is a scholar of unusual topics, as I understand, and lives a life of seclusion in the wilderness a few days travel from here. I fear that Oronoko's visit to him may be

involved in this tragedy." The courtier stops his pacing and faces you earnestly. "I need someone to find this man and speak to him. Discover what he and Oronoko spoke of, and whether or not it contributed to her death." He offers a hand to the party in a rare show of supplication. "Can I depend on you for this favor?"

If the characters decline Banu's request, then the courtier wants nothing more to do with them. He cautions them against revealing the nature of their discussion with others, then departs without any further conversation.

Assuming the characters offer their aid to Banu, he will seem noticeably relieved. He will answer any questions the characters might have to the best of his ability, but unfortunately there is little information to be had regarding the crime. He will not reveal specifics regarding the murders, instead going pale and simply saying that they were violent and ritualistic. Banu's understanding of Horiken's area of study is likewise vague, and he will simply refer to the man as an "obscure historian."

SCENE TWO: THE SCHOLAR'S HOME

The home of retired bushi turned scholar Seppun Horiken is at least two days travel outside the city where the characters are located. The directions provided by Banu are somewhat vague, and some degree of improvisation will be required (Hunting, TN 10 / Wilderness Lore, DC 15). There are no settlements or other residences within a day's travel in any direction. As the characters approach, read the following:

As you approach the home of Seppun Horiken, you notice a vague haze hanging over the area. There is no fog in the surrounding area, so there can be only one source for such a thing: there has been a fire here recently.

The characters discover a simple building partially consumed by fire. Evidence suggests that the fire was extinguished by rain before it truly got started, but the damage is still significant. Horiken is dead, although he does not appear to have died in the fire. While the characters should (rightfully) be reluctant to touch Horiken's remains, they can still search his home. What they discover depends upon the results of their skill roll.

Investigation 10/Search 15: The dark stains upon the blackened floor around Horiken's body are a clear indication that he did not die in the fire, but rather that he was killed with a blade, then left in the building as it burned.

Investigation 15/Search 20: A scroll detailing Horiken's research into a strange insignia found, from his accounts, on the blade of an assassin who attempted to kill him some weeks ago. Horiken's notes indicate the insignia is "obviously gaijin in origin," but not familiar to the scholar. He further notes that an associate of his may be more knowledgeable with it, and references attempting to contact him through the House of Crystal Water trading house in the characters' lord's city.

Investigation 25/Search 30: A scrap of green cloth, torn from a kimono hangs from a jagged piece of wood near the front wall.

SEPPUN HORIKEN'S TALE

Seppun Horiken was once a bushi serving as a miharu, those warriors blessed with defending the Emperor and his palace. As he grew older, Horiken began to doubt his abilities, believing that age would cripple his speed so that he could not fulfill his duty. With full honors and recognition from the Emperor himself, the guardsman stepped down. Always a bright and curious man, Horiken retired into obscurity to pursue the study of a controversial topic that had always fascinated him: gaijin culture. From his secluded home, Horiken was able to request copies of many Unicorn and Mantis histories that were made available to him because of his status. Though few in the Empire knew his name, Horiken soon became one of Rokugan's leading scholars in gaijin lore.

Horiken was an early target for the Cult of the Destroyer. The cult's leaders feared he might be able to determine their origin if he survived. They were mistaken, both about Horiken's knowledge of their ways and his capabilities. The first assassin was killed by the aging but capable bushi, and he quickly began tracking down anything he could find regarding the Destroyer's symbol on his gaijin blade. Horiken made plans to contact a Mantis associate of his through a local Yoritomo trading house, unaware that the house had already been compromised by the cult. The second wave of assassins did not fail, but Horiken had already laid the foundation of an investigation that could ultimately undo the cult.

The scroll found at Horiken's home is relatively important in terms of getting the characters further into the adventure. If the party fails their attempts to locate anything in the burned ruin of Horiken's house, you may provide clues in any other manner you see fit. Perhaps there is a copy of the insignia Horiken was studying somewhere else in the house, or perhaps one lingering assassin attempts to kill the party and fails, leaving his ritual blade behind for them to investigate. In any event, such clues will send the party in search of an authority on gaijin lore, which should inevitably lead them to the House of Crystal Water (at least after the Unicorn have been consulted and provide no information).

SCENE THREE: THE HOUSE OF CRYSTAL WATER

The House of Crystal Water is an obvious lead to pursue either as a means of discovering the nature of the strange gaijin symbol found in Horiken's home or by reading his account of the investigation from the scrolls recovered at his home. In either event, the Mantis trading house is the only real source of information on gaijin culture outside of any Unicorn concerns that may be present within the city, which turn up nothing.

The ranking member in attendance in the house is a pleasant, ingratiating man named Yoritomo Utawa. Utawa maintains a rather busy schedule, but the characters will find themselves admitted to see him very quickly if they appear at the House asking strange questions, as the Mantis has become somewhat paranoid of late. Assuming that the characters attempt to see Utawa, read the following:

The rooms within the House are decorated in an opulent style that would make even the most ostentatious Crane blush. Gold and jewels encrust virtually everything, an open display of the wealth that the Mantis have accumulated in their many prosperous trade negotiations. A short, portly man in an exquis-

itely detailed, jade-colored kimono smiles broadly as you enter. With a quick bow, he gestures for you to take a seat. "Greetings, honored guests. I am Yoritomo Utawa, the overseer of this house. How can the Mantis Clan be of assistance to you today?"

Utawa will feign ignorance of any tale involving Seppun Horiken or the gaijin insignia of the Destroyer. If pressed, he will retrieve a calligraphy set and demonstrate another symbol that only vaguely resembles the Destroyer's mark, claiming it is a gaijin warning that means "dangerous waters ahead" (this is true). In an attempt to be helpful, he assures the characters that he has an associate who will be arriving in town shortly that may be of more use to them, and that he will contact them shortly. He will not offer further information beyond saying that his associate is a kobune captain who is very well-traveled.

After speaking with Utawa, there will be few other leads for the characters to pursue unless they have ideas of their own they wish to investigate. They may wish to speak with their Otomo sponsor, or even report their progress to their lord. In any event, it will be late in the evening when they are next contacted. Read the following:

A soft rap at the entrance to your chambers disturbs your preparations for sleep. Sliding the screen back, you find a young messenger, no more than a boy really, waiting somewhat anxiously. He bows very deeply and offers you a scroll. Quickly breaking the seal, you find a message from the Mantis merchant Yoritomo Utawa.

"Friends, forgive the late hour, but you must come quickly. My associate has arrived, and is extremely alarmed by the symbol you have discovered. He must speak with you immediately."

The message is, of course, a trap. Utawa has marshaled his loyal forces, a number of Mantis bushi equal to twice the party's numbers, and plans to eliminate them. They lay in wait within the House of Crystal Waters, and will ambush the party as soon as they are all within the merchant house. There is no discussion among the attackers, and any that survive will die before revealing anything to the characters (the bushi are not members of the cult anyway, but merely thuggish brutes eager for violence). Assuming the characters are victorious and Utawa is killed, they will find upon his person a second strange blade bearing the same gaijin symbol. There are no answers to be had at this time, although the Otomo is nevertheless grateful that the assassins have been dealt with.

Although the characters will not realize it right away, they have attracted the cult's attention.

STATISTICS

Yoritomo Utawa: 8th level courtier / 2nd level samurai

Mantis bushi: 6th level fighters

Yoritomo Utawa: Rank 3 Yoritomo courtier

Mantis bushi: Rank 2 Yoritomo bushi

CHAPTER TWO:

DARK JOURNEY HOME

"We will camp near the Valley of Storms tomorrow night," Shinjo Hanari said, pointing at the map spread out before him. He closed his tessen and looked up at the commanders assembled in front of him. "My scouts tell me the Lion forces are gathering to oppose us there. We must teach the arrogant Lion a lesson here and now, else they will oppose our efforts to bring justice at every step. Tetsuko-san."

Otaku Tetsuko stepped forward. "Hai, Hanari-sama."

"Keep your battle maidens in reserve at the beginning of combat. When you feel the time is right, charge their line and break them."

Tetsuko bowed. "We will be ready, Hanari-sama."

"Yasoma-san," Hanari said, and the man standing next to her stepped forward. "You accompanied the scouts earlier today. What can you tell us about the terrain that we can use to our advantage?" Hanari frowned. "We are in their territory now and we must not underestimate the Lion's cleverness."

The strategy session continued long into the night. Dozens of strategies and battle plans were discussed and rejected. In the end Hanari had decided to utilize only the simplest of plans, relying on the strength of Unicorn cavalry to triumph over the defending Lion army. Tetsuko wasn't worried; three hundred of her Otaku battle maidens rode with Hanari's army, and they were the greatest warriors that could be found in Rokugan. Victory was no doubt at hand.

Tetsuko yawned and stepped outside the tent, only to find young Otaku Xiang Chi sitting on the floor. Once Xiang Chi sighted Tetsuko she lithely sprang to her feet and bowed. Tetsuko smiled despite her weariness. Xiang Chi reminded her of how she had acted at that age.

"I wish to have a word with you, Tetsuko-sama," Xiang Chi said in a low voice.

Tetsuko nodded and smiled at the young maiden. She stretched out her arms and legs to work out the kinks that had formed in her muscles after standing still for so long in her commander's tent. She asked Xiang Chi nonchalantly, "What is it, Xiang Chi-chan?"

"I need your guidance, Tetsuko-sama. I am not wise enough to choose the right path to take on my own."

Tetsuko stopped stretching and stared into Xiang Chi's eyes. Her usually bright eyes were darkened with confusion and torment. She had never seen the young battle maiden so morose before. "Of course, Xiang Chi-chan. Follow me to my tent."

They stepped quickly toward Tetsuko's tent and quickly entered. Xiang Chi waited as Tetsuko lit a lantern and hung it in the middle of the tent. After a few moments, Tetsuko turned to face her protégée. "Now then. What weighs on your mind?"

"It is about the campaign we are about to embark on, Tetsuko-sama."

Tetsuko blinked in surprise. Xiang Chi had never expressed any doubts or fears about past campaigns, and she had always thrown herself into the thickest of the fighting with zealotry.

"I can't explain it, Tetsuko-sama," Xiang Chi continued, "but I feel that this campaign is doomed. I tell myself it is silly to think so, but the sense of foreboding will not go away."

Tetsuko nodded thoughtfully. "Perhaps you are merely anxious about the coming battles, Xiang Chi. The Lion army will be the toughest challenge you have yet faced. Do not worry; you will no doubt prevail."

"No, my lady. That is not the problem," Xiang Chi said, and looked away from Tetsuko. "Earlier today, when I was scouting the forest, the monks Mitsu and Togashi Hoshi came to visit me."

Tetsuko raised an eyebrow. "What did your... unusual visitors want?"

"They told me Otaku Kamoko-sama is in danger. She is being hunted down in Phoenix lands by unspeakable evils. They believe that she will perish without help. They believe it is my destiny to save the soul of our Thunder. I do not wish to leave you, Tetsuko-sama," Xieng Chi said, her voice lowered to a whisper, "but I do not wish to fail my daimyo."

Tetsuko paused as she tried to voice a reply and dozens of thoughts raced through her head in seconds. In the end her answer was not difficult at all.

"Follow your heart, Xieng Chi, and do what you truly feel you must. If you wish to leave, I will gladly release you from your duties here." Tetsuko smiled warmly. "And if you go, be sure to bring Kamoko-sama back safely."

Xieng Chi bowed to her commander and ran out the tent, her crisis resolved. Tetsuko smiled to herself when she heard the thundering of hooves leading away from the camp.

The gates of Kyuden Hitomi opened slowly, but Mirumoto Bujun galloped into the castle when it was only partly open. He stopped his panting horse in the middle of the courtyard and jumped off. He pulled a scroll from his saddlebag and threw the reins to a stable boy. With the ease of one who had spent countless hours in the castle, Bujun unerringly made his way to the audience chamber.

Hitomi Kobai stood in front of the door with his arms crossed, unmoving. Bujun stopped in front of the man and curtly said, "I have an urgent message for Our Lady. Is she tending to court?"

Kobai turned his gaze on the Mirumoto samurai. It felt like his bright golden eyes stared directly through Bujun. Once again Bujun felt a bit of jealousy at the monk order, that he was not blessed with the Lady's powers, but he quickly suppressed the emotion.

"Are you expected by the Lady?" Kobai said in his smooth voice. "This is an emergency, man, let me in!" Bujun snarled.

Kobai frowned, but regained his composure in a moment. He moved to the side and pushed the giant doors open with one hand. Bujun walked into the audience room and knelt in front of the throne. The Lady sat on her throne, unsurprised by his sudden entrance. He caught her gaze and he looked down to the floor.

"My Lady," Bujun said, bowing prostrate, "My scouts patrolling the Phoenix border saw Agasha caravans departing our lands. When I heard the news, I ordered my men to search the Agasha castle for unusual signs." He clenched his hands in anger. "My Lady, the Agasha have taken everything from their homes. Their libraries are bare."

"I see," Hitomi said. "So they have all deserted my cause." The door flung open.

"We are not all traitors, my lady," said a form illuminated by the light. "Some of us remember our oaths." Bujun turned and squinted; he could make out the face of Agasha Tamori, the Agasha family daimyo.

"You have remained, Tamori," Hitomi said. Bujun as usual could not decipher the Lady's expression; did he sense surprise in her voice?

"Yes, my lady," Tamori said, and walked forward.

"My Lady," Bujun whispered, "please give me leave to chase the deserters with my legion. I will make them pay for their treachery."

From the corner of his eyes, Bujun saw Hitomi Kokujin perk up his head, manic interest radiating from his eyes. Kokujin looked up at the Lady and they stared at each other as they silently held a private conversation.

"No," Hitomi finally said. "I want no legions harassing their cowardly retreat." Hitomi rose from her throne and fixed her gaze on Tamori. "Follow me, Tamori." She turned and without a further glance back left the room. The shugenja strode forward and disappeared into the same exit.

Bujun bowed his head to the floor as the Lady left. "This insult will not go unpunished," he whispered to the floor. "I swear it will not end this way."

Ikoma Matoko could hardly continue to grip her katana, but she would not give up. Despite all her unit's efforts the Unicorn soldiers kept pressing on and on. They were truly worthy opponents; their silent charge had unnerved her men and their ferocious attack had decimated her ranks. Their umayaris struck down many of her men and what they missed, the hooves of their steeds trampled. She had survived many battles since she was forced to abandon her Akodo name but it looked like this one would be her last.

Suddenly a monstrous shriek rent the air. The sound continued, as if thousands of men were being slowly eviscerated at the same time. The sound slowly increased in pitch until it grew almost unbearable. Abruptly the sound disappeared. A huge presence loomed behind her, and before she could react, a giant katana swept through the battle maidens facing her and cleaved them in halves. The Unicorn forces started to scatter. Matoko looked up.

The katana dropped from Matoko's hands, forgotten, and she sank to her knees in the mud.

"Oh, Akodo-sama," she whispered, staring at the demon towering over her. "What have we done? What have we done?"

DARK JOURNEY HOME - TIMELINE

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE SERPENT (LATE SPRING)

THE LION MARCH

Slowly but surely, the Lion begin moving their forces south toward Crab lands. Strangely, Ikoma Tsanuri does not reveal her intent even to her closest advisors. Some among the Crab fear the worst, and begin preparing for a Lion invasion.

MEETING WITH KITSUKI KAAGI

For months, Ginawa and Matsu Hiroru have repeatedly encountered the minions of Goju Adorai, but discovered nothing conclusive regarding Toturi's location. The two heroes uncover an abandoned monastery rife with Goju and fight their way to its heart. They discover a prisoner held within its recesses, but it is not Toturi. The prisoner is a man named Kitsuki Kaagi, a Dragon magistrate who has been pre-

sumed dead for over ten years. For all this time he has been a prisoner of his brother, Iyekao. Iyekao is a willing minion of the Darkness and has struggled for a decade to corrupt his brother as well. Kaagi is grateful for his rescue and tells Hiroru and Ginawa a great deal about their enemy — not Adorai, but his true master, the Lying Darkness itself. Ironically, just as Ginawa and Hiroru discover this important truth, the Emperor Toturi is discovered in another Goju stronghold not three days' travel away.

MURDERER STOPPED

A murderer terrorizes the citizens of the Imperial City when he strikes down numerous Imperial Magistrates and city guards, day after day. Even a bounty of 300 koku does not bring the killer to justice. Finally, the efforts of Usagi Ozaki and an unknown ronin named Tokimasa discover the killer's identity while destroying a Bloodspeaker cult. The Imperial Regent Takuan offers the ronin the family name "Ujina" in recognition of his efforts. Ujina Tokimasa immediately swears fealty to Usagi Ozaki and the Hare Clan.

RESCUE OF EMPEROR TOTURI

For almost two years, there has been no sign of the missing Emperor. Seemingly overnight, numerous individuals are drawn to the ruins near Mori Kage Toshi by strange visions. Among these are Otaku Kamoko (who is still seeking Matsu Agetoki), the Wasp daimyo Tsuruchi, numerous Naga, and the Bloodspeaker, Jama Suru. Those assembled find themselves fighting a pitched battle against the minions of the Lying Darkness, who seem to be guarding the kidnapped Emperor. In the end, Kamoko escapes with the newly-found Emperor.

From the darkness within the castle, Goju Adorai watches in amusement. He knows that Toturi's soul has been fully corrupted by the Darkness, and that the Emperor is now an unwilling minion of Nothing. The heroes of Rokugan have only rescued Toturi because he has allowed it to be so, and with a shadow spawn upon the throne the Lying Darkness can truly begin its destruction of the Empire.

SANZO'S AMBITION

The ronin Sanzo discovers the shards of the shattered Bloodsword, Ambition, within the empty halls of Kyuden Bayushi. He finds himself strangely compelled to take the shards and reforge the blade. Sadly, some pieces are missing and the result is merely a wakizashi rather than a katana.

THE FIRST EDICT

Toturi I wastes little time reasserting his power as Emperor and issues several edicts to restore order to his Empire. First among them is to declare the peace between Rokugan and the Naga race officially dissolved. Little is needed to convince the Emperor such an action is justified — the Crab report heavy losses due to the Naga's betrayal, and the Dragon mountains run red with the blood of Mirumoto samurai as the Naga press onward.

The Emperor declares that the Monkey Clan will lead a large portion of the Imperial Legion to strike against the Naga and aid the Dragon in their war. Toku, the Champion of the Monkey, is somewhat disturbed by his old friend's command to leave no survivors among the Naga, but readily accepts his duty. In reward for his loyalty, Toturi grants Toku's new Minor Clan lands in the vacant Scorpion provinces — an act that greatly angers the hidden Scorpion.

THE SECOND EDICT

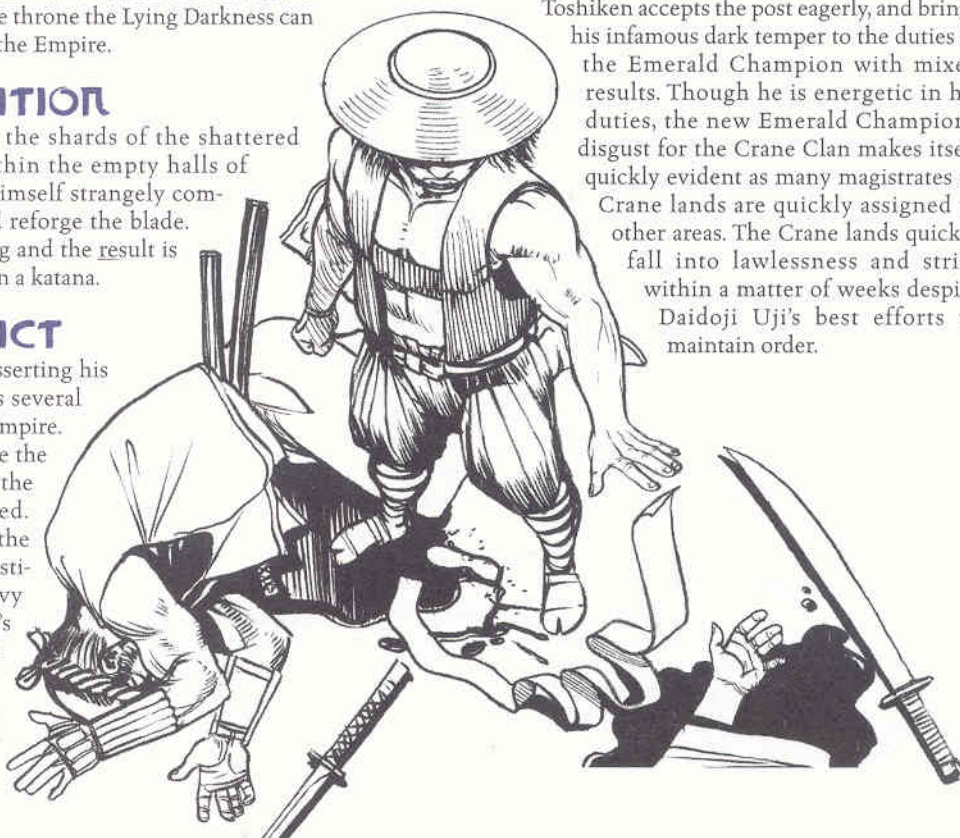
In an unprecedented command, Toturi I recognizes the struggle of the Unicorn to maintain peace by declaring that they have assumed the Lion's traditional role as Right Hand of the Emperor. Toturi I calls upon Ide Tadaki, the Unicorn's representative in the Imperial Court, and charges his Clan with their first duty — to punish the Lion for threatening the Crab and destroy the corruption that has eaten away at the heart of the Kitsu family. Again, the Emperor shocks those in attendance by declaring that the Kitsu servants of the Shadowlands are to be destroyed for their crimes. Kuni Sensin, representative of the Crab Clan, questions why the Emperor has not commanded the Lion army to cease its advance upon Crab lands. Sensin is ordered to commit seppuku for his temerity.

As Unicorn samurai are recalled from across the Empire to deal with this command, criminal activity begins to rise steadily and enormously.

THE THIRD EDICT

The last of what would be known as the Three Edicts further breaks tradition and appoints an Emerald Champion to the Emperor's side instead of holding the ancestral contest for the post. Toturi I decrees that times are too trying for the Clans to divert their attention in such a manner, but such a powerful and important position cannot remain empty. The Emperor names Seppun Toshiken, illegitimate son of Kakita Toshimoko, as his Emerald Champion.

Toshiken accepts the post eagerly, and brings his infamous dark temper to the duties of the Emerald Champion with mixed results. Though he is energetic in his duties, the new Emerald Champion's disgust for the Crane Clan makes itself quickly evident as many magistrates in Crane lands are quickly assigned to other areas. The Crane lands quickly fall into lawlessness and strife within a matter of weeks despite Daidoji Uji's best efforts to maintain order.





YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE HORSE (EARLY SUMMER)

KUWANAN PURSUES YORITOMO

The Mantis withdraw from Beiden Pass and continue their inexorable march north. Heedless of the news from Otsan Uchi, Doji Kuwanan continues his pursuit of the Mantis north across the Empire. The Lion are outraged at such effrontery from both of the other Clans, but their voice in court goes unheard. The Lion army is likewise unable to oppose such an offense, as they are split between battling the Unicorn and advancing relentlessly upon the Kaiu Wall. Though Yoritomo has had ample time to recover from Kuwanan's surprise attack, his proximity to Crane lands only serves to further push the Mantis into a disadvantage, and Yoritomo finds his path home cut off. Seeking the only logical course, the Son of Storms opts to skirt the Crane lands and retreats to the edge of Phoenix territory. Yoritomo hopes the Crane will not be so willing to send an uninvited army into the lands of their longtime allies without proper protocol, and the Mantis are given time to regroup.

REVELATION OF THE KOLAT

Before the Imperial Court, Toturi I cuts down Isawa Osugi, author of the New Tao. The Imperial Court is horrified, and Toturi speaks only one word. "Kolai." In the subsequent weeks, the Imperial Guard are sent out to execute many other Kolai at Toturi's command, some of which have no true affiliation to the organization. The true Kolai, who already suspect Toturi has become a pawn of the Darkness, withdraw their remaining agents from Otsan Uchi.

SEPPUKU OF CHANCELLOR TAKUAN

The Imperial Chancellor cannot no longer bear to witness the acts his lord has perpetrated, but he is bound by his honor to contradict Toturi I. When he hears of Osugi's death and the rampant Kolai hunts, he can bear no more.

Takuan faces his friend one last time, asking permission to be relieved of his duties and be allowed to commit seppuku for being unable to perform as a true samurai should. What is left of the true Toturi begs his friend to stay by his side and steady his soul, and Takuan agrees. The next day, however, the Emperor instead announces to the Imperial Court that he has ordered the Chancellor to commit seppuku for failing to properly govern in his absence. The final insult comes when Toturi orders Seppun Toshiken, whom Takuan despises, to stand as the Chancellor's second.

KAGE TAKES A NEW STUDENT

Seeking to gain what aid he can, Kolai Master Kage gathers some of his most promising students to protect them from the wrath of the Darkness. It is not long, however, before Adorai understands Kage's plan and instead stages an ambush in Crane lands for the former Akodo. Kage is saved by one of his most promising students, Asahina Dorai.

STORMS OVER MATSU CASTLE

Having finally gathered in full force on the plains of the Unicorn, the bulk of the Otaku Battle Maidens charge against the Lion, pressing from the north and towards Shiro Matsu. The Lion armies fall before the Unicorn at every turn, until the Otaku stand before the ancestral home of the Matsu family. What would be a quick and glorious victory instead becomes a slaughter as two Lion legions, unaccounted for during the past few months, emerge from the castle. At their vanguard is the Jade Champion, Kitsu Okura, and a host of oni spawn. The battle is joined, and the Otaku quickly realize that the Lion army is fueled by the dark strength of Jigoku. The Otaku are almost completely wiped out, and few remain to retreat back to Unicorn lands. A dark storm settles over the land for a day's travel in every direction from Shiro Matsu — a darkness not seen since the corruption the Last Hantei by Fu Leng.

DEATH OF MATSU AGETOKI

Unaware of the plight of her kin, Otaku Kamoko continues her hunt for Matsu Agetoki, following him into the western Phoenix lands. For months Agetoki has fled from her, not out of fear, but hoping not to embroil the young Thunder in the shadowy world of the Kolai that has consumed his life. Agetoki confronts Kamoko and attacks her, forcing her to kill him. After his defeat, she finds a death poem tucked into his obi. Agetoki died as a Lion, carrying his secret to his grave.

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE GOAT (MID-SUMMER)

MANTIS STRIKE AGAINST THE PHOENIX

As Doji Kuwanan hesitates to enter Phoenix lands with his army, Yoritomo is urged into action by his advisors. It is only a matter of time, they reason, before the Phoenix and Crane

come to an accord and attack the Mantis from two fronts. Their reasoning convinces the Son of Storms that the Phoenix, broken and powerless as they are, are also unable to tend their own land and thus fall under Toturi's edict that the Mantis were to govern and patrol all "unaligned lands."

Yoritomo is unconvinced, but several of his generals act without his authority and attack the Phoenix. Once the battle is joined, Yoritomo can do little but see it through to its conclusion, and pushes forward into Phoenix lands. It is only discovered later that Yoritomo's advisors have been replaced or deluded by Goju Adorai's minions, hoping to sow more chaos throughout the Empire.

SHIRO KITSUKI IS TAKEN

The Naga press their advance into Dragon lands as a great many Brotherhood monks and former Togashi ise zumi follow. Standing before Shiro Kitsuki, Hoshi emerges from the Naga's front lines and beseeches his former clansmen to stand aside in the face of such an obviously overwhelming force. A force of Mirumoto samurai and kikage zumi charge forth to engage the monks and Naga while the majority of the Kitsuki family escapes. Hoshi and his followers watch in horror as the Naga engage the Dragon mercilessly. By nightfall, no more of Hitomi's followers remain within miles of Last Step Castle.

LION AND CRAB

As Ikoma Tsanuri presses further into the Crab lands with her army, she is shocked to find herself suddenly the target of a sizable Crab attack. The battle is joined too quickly for the Lion Champion to attempt parley. The smaller Crab force is swiftly beaten back, and a confused Ikoma Tsanuri orders her soldiers to allow their enemies to escape.

Tsanuri begins to suspect something is greatly amiss. The Lion's intent had been to support the Crab during their Champion's absence, and her messages to the Crab Champion had been answered with letters of welcome, but now she suspects those letters are not legitimate. In fact the Lying Darkness has been interfering with communication on both sides, sending spawn to appear as the intended recipients and dispatching false missives in return.

Atop the Kaiu Wall, Hida O-Ushi receives reports that Ikoma Tsanuri's forces have destroyed another city. Unaware that the true intent of the Lion Clan has been distorted by shapeshifting minions of the Darkness or that no Crab city has been harmed, O-Ushi sends word that all able-bodied warriors are to gather and repel the Lion at all costs.

UJI DENIES KUWANAN'S COMMAND

Doji Kuwanan halts his pursuit of Yoritomo an acceptable distance from the Phoenix border. While the Crane Champion sends messengers to the Shiba, he also sends word to Daidoji Uji for aid. Once the Phoenix grant him passage, Kuwanan reasons, it would be best to have enough force to rout Yoritomo quickly and cause little harm to their allies' lands. The message Uji receives is much different from the one Kuwanan sends, as the messenger is slain by the Lying Darkness and replaced. Uji receives word that he is to inform the Crane Champion of his status. Having received visions from his ancestor calling for revenge against the Lion, Uji returns the messenger with the proclamation that the Daidoji will attack the weakened Lion Clan and retake Shiro no Yojin

for the glory of the Crane. Naturally, the message is unaltered and delivered in perfect detail to the Crane Champion, who believes Uji has defied his commands.

THE BROTHERHOOD WITHDRAWS

Fearing their naiveté has allowed them to become unwitting soldiers in the Naga's campaign against the Dragon, the leaders of the Brotherhood inform Hoshi that they can no longer aid him. Hoshi understands, as he also had hoped to resolve the matter peacefully. However, the son of Togashi knows that he cannot be turned away from his course now, and remains at the Naga's side with a small group of his loyal tattooed followers.

SLAUGHTER OF THE IMPERIAL COURT

Emperor Toturi I calls for his Emerald Champion in the dead of night. The Emperor explains to Toshiken that in times of such chaos, an Emperor cannot afford to be burdened by uncertainty. Though he may ask one advisor to bring him news from outside the Imperial City, another advisor may bring him a completely different tale of the same subject. Toturi tells Toshiken that only one thing can determine truth — the steel of a samurai's sword. He commands the Emerald Champion to kill the Imperial Court so that he can find peace and guide the Empire back to order. From midnight until dawn the next day, the Imperial Guard moves from chamber to chamber, cutting down yojimbo and courtier alike, until the Imperial Palace fades to a perfect silence.

Seppun Toshiken is heavily burdened by the foul deeds he has performed, and takes little solace in the fact that he has served the Emperor's will. When he reports to the Emperor, he finds his two sons in Toturi's presence. Toshiken watches in terror as their faces fade away, replaced by featureless eggshells. As the Emerald Champion looks into Toturi's eyes, he sees the evil that lurks there. He flees the Imperial Palace, taking any members of Toturi's Army who believe his tale.

TOTURI'S MADNESS

After his return from Mori Kage, the once honorable Toturi begins to display a murderous insanity. The Lying Darkness has laid claim to his soul, but what once was Toturi is not entirely dead. Toturi's soul remains, as the Darkness requires his knowledge and wisdom to effectively act as Emperor. Unfortunately, both Adorai and the Darkness underestimated Toturi's strength of will. While Toturi found he could not resist the Darkness' commands, he invariably executed them in savage and unpredictable ways. In this manner, he hoped, one of his servants might realize that something was wrong and act against him. Toturi hoped that someone might see the truth and destroy him, as he destroyed the possessed Hantei, before too much damage was done.

Though none of Toturi's servants opposed their Emperor, his plan was still successful. Toturi's blatant execution of the Darkness' commands aroused a great deal of suspicion, forcing the Lying Darkness to act upon its plans before it was truly prepared to do so and eventually seek alliances in the Shadowlands out of sheer desperation.

WHAT'S NEW IN DARK JOURNEY HOME

NEW KIHŌ

STRIKE OF SILENT WATERS

KIHŌ FEAT

When you strike your opponents, you may use your chi to attack those far away.

Prerequisites: Depths of the Void, Improved Unarmed Strike, Void Use, any two other kiho feats

Benefit: Before you make an unarmed attack, spend a Void Point and declare you will use this feat. Make a touch attack against a living creature. If you succeed, you may target another opponent that is directly behind your original target up to ten feet away. Deal your unarmed damage against that opponent. You do not need line of sight to the second target, but if you do not have line of sight, you must also make a Meditation check with a DC of 25.

STRIKE OF SILENT WATERS

Type: Mushin

Element: Void

Mastery: 7

This kiho is very effective and very impressive to see. Only the most focused monks have the discipline to control their chi so far away from their body. With a simple open handed strike, the monk can use the water in a body to magnify and direct his chi. Properly focused chi will be able to knock back an opponent up to ten feet away. One cannot deny the spiritual power of the monk if he is able to damage someone without touching him at all.

The character must spend a Void point to activate this kiho. He makes an unarmed attack against another living creature. Ignore armor for this attack. If the character succeeds in hitting his target, he may deal his unarmed damage to another living creature up to ten feet directly behind the original target. The character does not need to be able to see the second target; if he cannot see the second target, he must make a Meditation/Void roll at a TN of 20 or miss the target.

THE UJINA FAMILY

The Ujina Family is one of the smallest Minor Clan families in existence. The family was the only one created by the Imperial Regent Takuan, and was established only a few weeks before the Emperor Toturi the First's return to the throne. The Imperial Regent promised Tokimasa he would do his best to give him the Ujina family name when Toturi the First was found once more. Toturi saw no reason to break the promise when he returned to the throne, and made the christening official.

Like most minor clan families, the Ujina family was created because of an extreme act of heroism by its founder. During the chaotic months following Toturi the First's disappearance,

Otosan Uchi was suddenly plagued by crime. Imperial Magistrates, the Sword of Yotsu, and Imperial Sentinels worked around the clock to make the capital a safe place to live once again. As time passed the committed samurai eventually brought to justice all the criminals that had taken advantage of the chaos.

However one person seemed to be able to elude everyone's attempts to catch him. He started with a murder of a low-ranking Ikoma courtier who had just arrived at the Imperial City. A Kitsuki in the Imperial Magistrates determined that his throat had been slashed with one swift stroke of an aiguchi. The murderer had then savagely stabbed out his right eye.

The next night, the murderer struck a Sword of Yotsu in the same manner. A few days later, an Imperial Sentinel fell to the same man. He continued to kill, raising his sights higher and higher with every assassination. No one could stop him.

A bounty of 100 koku was offered for the head of the killer. Magistrates from all over Rokugan gathered to the city to catch the madman. It affected nothing. The murders continued. No one could even catch sight of the man, and the new magistrates spent a large part of their time arguing over jurisdictions and who should be the one to stop him. Dozens of murders went unanswered. Months passed. The bounty was raised to 200 koku, then finally 300.

A few months after the first murder Usagi Ozaki, the Hare clan daimyo, entered the capital following the lead of a Bloodspeaker cult that had terrorized the West Hub village. When he entered the city a devious looking ronin approached him. He appeared from the shadows, seemingly from nowhere, without any sound. Ozaki at first was put off by his appearance and his shifty eyes; he could have sworn that the ronin was the murderer the entire city was looking for. However, he began to talk with a smooth voice, which somehow put down his guard and made him want to trust the ronin.

The ronin's name was Tokimasa. He told Ozaki that he was the son of a noble samurai who had been killed by Bloodspeakers. He had devoted his entire life to finding facts about the organization and bringing them down. To fund his search for Bloodspeaker cults he decided to cash in on the bounty on the murderer. He had arrived at the Imperial city a month ago, only to have found no trace of the killer. He said he had heard of the tragic story of the Hare clan, and had always wanted to meet the famous Ozaki who had heroically brought his clan back from destruction.

Ozaki as a rule hated sycophants, but something about Tokimasa's behavior told him that he was being completely sincere. Ozaki took the young man under his wing and they began the hunt for the Bloodspeakers together. The trail was confusing, and they had to take great care to keep from alerting the cult of their presence. Finally, after a week of hard work, they figured out that the Bloodspeakers would gather at a small temple on the outskirts of the city the next night.

Ozaki and Tokimasa sneaked into the temple together. The pair separated to find ways into the secret Bloodspeaker lair; Tokimasa seemed to melt into the shadows and moved so silently that Ozaki could have sworn that no one was ever around him. Ozaki found a long tunnel hidden behind a statue of the Fortune Bishamon and followed it down to see a ritual in progress. He wanted to wait until he was fully aware of everything in the room but he could not let them cast their spell. After making sure he knew what he was getting into, he charged into battle.

The Bloodspeakers almost seemed ready for his psychotic assault and it seemed the Hare daimyo would finally fall in duty. Suddenly, a blur appeared next to Ozaki and slashed the cultist nearest to Ozaki across the neck. In the next moment, the man stabbed the cultist in the eye and kicked him in the chest. It was Tokimasa.

The fight was long and harsh; the cultists fought with all their might, using maho Ozaki had never seen before. A cultist stabbed Tokimasa in the arm twice before Ozaki could slay the man. Later on in the battle Tokimasa repaid the debt and saved Ozaki's life.

When the fighting was finally over Tokimasa limped over to the head cultist and gave a shout. With no compulsions about touching dead bodies, he plunged his hand into the cultist's kimono and pulled out an Imperial Magistrate's badge... one that had been stolen from a victim of the serial murderer. Ozaki had been the one to slay the head cultist but had somehow missed the badge. He marveled at Tokimasa's sharp eyes. The serial murderer crisis now seemed to be resolved.

Takuan was relieved that the murderer was killed and offered Tokimasa the three hundred koku bounty. Tokimasa humbly refused, stating that he had only done what he had done to serve the Empire. When Takuan offered the reward to Usagi Ozaki, he also refused, saying that Tokimasa had been the one to figure out the murderer's identity. Pleased by the friendship of the two men and their humility, Takuan made the promise to Tokimasa that Toturi eventually fulfilled. Toturi christened him Ujina Tokimasa, with the stipulation that Tokimasa join the Hare clan. Tokimasa, overjoyed, agreed instantly.

There are currently only ten in Rokugan that bear the Ujina name, all men and women that Ozaki found and recommended to his newfound friend. All of them are ronin who are bright-eyed and still eager to serve the Empire. Tokimasa trains the Ujina his own "everything to bring evil to justice" technique at Reichin's Refuge Dojo, the main dojo of the Hare Clan.

Use these stats in place of those mentioned in the Rokugan D20 book during this time period.

THE UJINA FAMILY

Favored Class: Fighter
Starting Honor: 1
Class Skills: Move Silently
Starting Outfit:
 1. Masterwork aiguchi

THE UJINA FAMILY

Benefit: +1 Agility
Glory: 0.5
Status: 0.5
Special: Ujina who attend the Usagi Bushi School (either as his starting school or through Path of Egress of the Ujina Fighter Path) may gain a free Raise to all his Full Attacks by reducing his TN by an additional 5 points.

THE UJINA FIGHTER SCHOOL (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Requirements: To qualify to become an Ujina Fighter School, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +3

Skills: Move Silently (5 ranks), Hide (5 ranks)

Special: Sneak Attack +1d6

Class Skills: The Ujina fighter's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are class features of the Ujina fighter prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Ujina fighters are proficient in all simple and martial weapons as well as in light armor.

Use the Shadow: An Ujina fighter may blend into the surrounding darkness. At night or in shadows, he gains a +5 circumstantial bonus to Hide checks when not moving.

Bonus Feat: At third level, the Ujina fighter gains a bonus feat that may be selected from the list available to the fighter class (except for Weapon Specialization).

Sneak Attack: If the Ujina fighter attacks an opponent who is unable to defend himself effectively, the Ujina fighter can strike a vital spot for extra damage. The extra damage is +1d6 at 3rd level and an additional +1d6 at 5th level. (See Rokugan for details on sneak attack.)

Knife in the Dark: If you attack an opponent who is unaware of your presence, you gain an additional attack equal to your highest base attack. If you use this ability, you are flat-footed for the next turn.

THE UJINA FIGHTER SCHOOL (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 1

Path of Entry: None. This is an entry-level path.

Path of Egress: Usagi Bushi School 1

Benefit: +1 Awareness

Beginning Skills: Kenjutsu, Tantojutsu, Acting, Sincerity, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Any one Bugei or Low skill

Honor: 0, plus 5 boxes

Beginning Outfit: As Usagi Bushi School

Technique: Knife in the Dark — Those trained by Ujina Tokimasa learn to use every advantage at their disposal to destroy their enemy. Though sneaking and ambushing opponents are considered dishonorable acts, Tokimasa believes the end justifies the means. One must make sure criminals do not escape. In the first round of combat, if an opponent is unaware of your presence, you may Full Attack the opponent to gain an

TABLE 2-1: THE UJINA FIGHTER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+0	+2	+0	Use the Shadow
2nd	+2	+0	+3	+0	Bonus Feat
3rd	+3	+1	+3	+1	Sneak attack +1d6
4th	+4	+1	+4	+1	
5th	+5	+1	+4	+1	Knife in the Dark, Sneak attack +2d6



additional attack. If you use this technique, your TN to be hit is reduced to 5 for the next three rounds. You also gain a free Raise to all your Tantojutsu rolls.

HEROIC OPPORTUNITIES

THE BATTLE OF THE VALLEY OF STORMS

Location: Valley of Storms; Lion vs. Unicorn

If the party is in or near the Valley of Storms (near Shiro Matsu), it is likely that the characters will become involved in the ensuing battle. There is no need to roll opposed Battle Rolls for the generals; the Unicorn army is doomed to fall to the onslaught of Okura's Tainted followers. The Unicorn are Winning for the first several rounds, Even for one round, and then Losing thereafter. The Lion are Losing for the first few rounds, Even for one round, and then Winning until the Unicorn army is routed.

LION HEROIC OPPORTUNITIES

Reinforce the Line

The most effective defense against a cavalry charge is a disciplined line. If one soldier breaks, the line will crumble and all will be lost. You are the head of a unit, and you notice a few soldiers in the front line begin to succumb to their cowardice and run away from the thundering hooves of the incoming Otaku Battle Maidens. If you act quickly to shore up the line, you may prevent wholesale slaughter of the forward units. The front line is far in front of your unit, but if your men charge you will arrive in time. You are immediately considered Heavily Engaged, and for the next two turns, you take one extra die of damage. Gain three extra Glory points each Round for the rest of the battle.

UNICORN HEROIC OPPORTUNITIES

Destroy the Reserves

You are waiting for the perfect moment to disrupt the Lion commander's battle plans. Your prayers are answered when you notice a unit of Lion spearmen moving to reinforce the front lines. The spearmen

have no idea you are in the perfect position to charge them. If you take them by surprise you will kill their men and destroy their morale. Consider yourself Heavily Engaged for the next two Rounds and the GM may roll two extra unkept dice of damage.

Maiden's Savior

Akuma no Oni's arrival throws your line into disarray. The unholy demon seems to be taking perverse pleasure in killing the proud Otaku Battle Maidens. As you turn to flee the battle you see one of their number fall from her beheaded horse. Three Lion samurai rush forward to make sure she remains down. The Lion samurai are of a Rank equal to the player characters. If you successfully rescue the battle maiden, you must place her on your own horse. This takes two Rounds, during which time you are Heavily Engaged. If you (and she) survive the battle, gain the Allies advantage (the battle maiden), and a gift of the GM's choosing.

THE KOLAT REVEALED

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

After Toturi's beheading of Isawa Osugi, courtiers everywhere have been scrambling to find out anything they can about the Kolat, rumor or not. The Emperor has been unwilling to release more information about the group, so the court was forced to find its information in another way. The rumors fly, each one even wilder than the one preceding it. The Kolat are a Scorpion front. Akodo Kage, Bayushi Kachiko, and Bayushi Aramoro are part of the Kolat. The Kolat are brainwashers who are in league with Bloodspeaker cultists to take over Rokugan. No one can tell the truth from the outrageous rumors that have pervaded the court. Finally Otomo Izo, a young and ambitious courtier in the Imperial Court, offers a great reward to those who can bring to the court reliable and useful information about the mysterious organization.

FOCUS

The truth is hard to root out. No one has ever actually spoken to a Kolat, and no one even acknowledges they have heard of the group. Even the name of the group is unrecognized by ronin and the other unsavory types in the Imperial City. A drunkard named Nashi tells the party that the search will yield nothing in the Imperial City itself, but that a small number of them can be found in the surrounding cities and villages. Eventually their efforts lead them to a ronin named Hojo in a bar in West Hub Village.

Hojo seems hard to convince, but after many bottles of sake he reveals that he has a connection to a Kolat sect inside Ootosan Uchi. He is not affiliated with the organization, he claims, but he has helped them out a couple times for koku (nothing criminal, he quickly adds in the presence of any magistrates). Hojo is convinced the Kolat are harmless and will not harm the empire. If pressed, Hojo will lead them to the Kolat stronghold in the city.

STRIKE

The "Kolats stronghold" is in the first floor of a tea house in the disreputable part of town. When the party enters, five to seven brutes dressed in ronin clothes attack the party with katana and peasant weapons. Hojo disappears in the chaos. If the party survives the attack, the Imperial Sentinels arrive at the teahouse, alerted by the owner that a disturbance was occurring at his place of business. Hojo disappears, and nobody in the room seems to want to testify on the party's behalf. The party must now do some quick talking to get out of this situation. Trying to convince the Sentinels that they were framed by Hojo would probably not work, for the Imperial Sentinels cannot find him in the area. Trying to convince the guards that the party was ambushed by the brutes might not work, for no one will attest to it.

THE MANTIS CHARTER

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

The Mantis army suddenly appears on the Phoenix coast and steadily advances towards the Phoenix castles. Yoritomo himself leads the huge army of soldiers well experienced from their mercenary days during the Clan Wars. The Phoenix soldiers are young, inexperienced, and outnumbered by Yoritomo's men. If Yoritomo's army keeps pace, it will arrive at the gates of Shiro Shiba in a week.

FOCUS

You have been asked by the Phoenix Champion herself to help a group of Phoenix skirmishers slow down the Mantis advance. Tsukune needs more time to transfer important documents to Kyuden Isawa just in case the defenses fall, more time to call the Elemental Masters for help, and more time to set up defenses against the Mantis. She is willing to give anything the party wishes in exchange for their help — fealty, koku, gifts, or just simply a Clan Champion in their debt.

STRIKE

There is no way for the party to stop the army or make it fall back from its attack. The Mantis army is well organized and moves quickly and efficiently, even off their boats. It will take extremely competent small unit tactics to set traps and attempt to stop Mantis scouts from revealing the terrain to the army. Misdirection techniques, illusions, and other tricks must be used to slow down the advance and perhaps lower their morale.

Yoritomo is a devious general, and once he figures out that there is a skirmisher unit in front of him, he will assign units to destroy the party. Also, part of the army separates from the main army. If the party follows the smaller offshoot of the Mantis army, they will follow the Tsuruchi into wholesale slaughter by the Shadow at Morikage Castle.

AWAKENING ANTIQUITY

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

Near a small forest village called Hoshino, or Star Field, is a strange circle of standing stones. The stones have been there throughout recorded history, and the villagers revere them as a gift of the kami, even though their true origins are unknown. The circle lies on top of a tall rocky hill, which grants a spectacular view of the night sky and gives the village its name.

But recently the villagers discovered that the stones' appearance has changed. They were once featureless boulders, but now they are gaining a discernable shape. The moss and lichen on their ancient surfaces remains undisturbed. It is as if the stones' shape is changing from within.

In these troubled times, everyone is on guard against unexpected supernatural events. The characters are contacted by the local lord and invited to his domain in the hopes that they will investigate the strange occurrence. If they are Emerald Magistrates, the Emerald Champion sends them to investigate, always on the lookout for Shadowlands incursions. He believes this is worthy of attention.

FOCUS

The village lies deep within the forest, and the journey to the village can be as fraught with peril as the GM sees fit, but a feeling of unease permeates the land.

The characters have a number of strange omen-like encounters with woodland animals. First, a small herd of deer stands on the path, barring their way. They do not run away, nor do they attack. They merely stand watching the characters. To pass, the characters must physically remove them from the path. If the deer are attacked, they do not run away, allowing themselves to be killed. Throughout this encounter the deer exude a feeling of intense curiosity, even if they are slain.

Along the way, the characters have similar encounters with other animals, like foxes, birds, and small game. The GM should feel free to devise other encounters designed not to threaten the characters but to make them nervous. The force controlling the animals does not wish to harm them, yet.

When the characters arrive at the village, they find that half of the villagers are gone, and the rest of them are in a panic. The missing villagers have disappeared without a trace. They babble that the circle of standing stones has changed even more. They are developing features like arms and faces.

STRIKE

The standing stones are Shakoki Dogu, and were placed on the hill by an unknown race that predates Rokugan by thousands of years. The statues have rested there for so long that their features eroded away. Housed with the Shakoki Dogu are nature spirits that have slept for untold millennia. The growing power of the Living Darkness has threatened the very fabric of existence, and disturbed them in their ancient slumber.

The villagers have disappeared because they have been physically and spiritually absorbed by the spirits within the statues. During the night, villagers are touched by the Shakoki Dogu in dreams, and when morning arrives, they are gone from their homes. The other villagers are plagued by suggestive but chaotic nightmares about the circle of standing stones. The Shakoki Dogu need power to reawaken fully, and they take their power from living beings. They are also curious, wanting to study the strange new inhabitants of the land that was once theirs. These spirits have tremendous power, capable of altering the weather and controlling the forest animals. When they are awakened, their statues will be fully detailed depictions of strange inhuman creatures, and the spirits will be able to control the forest itself.

The remaining hundred or so villagers will continue to disappear, 1-10 every night, until the spirits are fully reawakened. They require the life force of 30-60 more human beings to fully reawaken. At that point, the spirits will be a force to be reckoned with, with collective powers rivaling an Oracle or an Elemental Dragon. They will seek out the Living Darkness wherever it hides and seek to destroy it, but they will not care that a puny human civilization stands in the way.

The Shakoki Dogu can be stymied by evacuating the remnants of the village or by somehow placating the spirits of the Shakoki Dogu. Destroying the stones destroys their resting place and disperses their power to the winds; only a shugenja of great power (Rank 5 or Level 15) can perform such a feat, and only before they have completed their awakening. After that, it is impossible. Villagers who have disappeared are still lost. Shugenja or other magic-using characters can communicate with the spirits by sitting on a disc-shaped stone in the center of the circle and meditating. They want the Living Shadow destroyed, and they will not sleep again until it has been. They would make a powerful ally in the struggle against the Lying Darkness, if only they could be convinced.

IMPORTANT NPCS

BAYUSHI ARAMASU, THE TRAITOR

Bayushi Aramasu's life can only be described by one word: betrayal.

His father was Bayushi Aramoro, famed yojimbo of Bayushi Kachiko, and his mother was Yogo Asami, lady Kachiko's handmaiden and body double. His parents were both heroes of the Clan Wars, tested in the fires of chaos and battle. As far

back as Aramasu can remember, those around him expected the same kind of heroism and bravery from him. He was rigorously trained by Shosuro sensei in all the techniques that would come in handy to him on the Scorpion battlefield.

However, the only thing young Aramasu had wanted was recognition and love from his father. Aramoro was always gone. He had missions to fulfill and had to keep the clan from falling apart in those times of trouble. Aramasu saw his father at most once a year, and the conversations between father and son were always stilted.

Logically Aramasu knew that his father could not spend any more time with him than he did; but he grew to resent his father for his absence. When the Kolat whispered an invitation to join an organization to support the interests of the empire, Aramasu gladly accepted.

At first Aramasu enjoyed his time with the Kolat. He was valued as one of the very few agents within the clan of secrets and the Kolat treated their agents well. Aramasu gladly did the tasks the Kolat asked of him and thought little of his betrayal of his clan.

Aramasu grew older within the Scorpion strongholds and he grew to realize what a mistake his youthful transgression had been. He accepted that his father had to fulfill his duties for the clan, that in his own way he was protecting his son's future. The Kolat did not care for him. He was only a tool for them to infiltrate a hated enemy. He regretted his association with the Kolat and began to research ways to escape.

When Kakita Toshimoko exiled the Scorpion clan to the Burning Sands, Aramasu was ready to follow his clan out of Rokugan or perhaps remain behind to aid his father. To his great surprise he was told — not by his father, but by one of his former sensei — that he was being fostered to the Mantis clan. Aramasu was shocked, but gritted his teeth and bowed to his father's will.

He was a tool. He knew his father had sent him to the Mantis on purpose, so that he could gather valuable information from his foster family and pass them along to the spymasters that scurry along the shadows. He hated his banishment to the Mantis Isles, but he told himself to bear it for the good of the clan.

To his great surprise the Mantis Isles suited him perfectly. Mantis samurai were forthright to the point of being crude, but honest. They treated him gingerly for the first few months, unsure how much of a stereotypical Scorpion Aramasu was. After he had thrown and been thrown by the best of them in their dojo, they quickly warmed up to him. Aramasu could sense Yoritomo, the Mantis lord, occasionally watching him as he interacted with his people. Like his father, Yoritomo was a busy man, but he took the time to talk to Aramasu when he spotted him. It was the oddest feeling, but Aramasu started to feel at home with these people.

When Scorpion spies approached him for the secret trading routes and passageways to Yoritomo's palace, Aramasu made a decision. He would no longer lie to himself or betray those who had taken him in. Aramasu left the rendezvous without telling the Scorpion any secrets. With the help of Yoritomo Masasue, a sympathetic Kolat, he bartered his way out of the Kolat with the locations of secret Scorpion ports along the Phoenix coast. When Yoritomo decided to annex the Phoenix lands he led the Mantis forces to the secret Scorpion ports.

Aramasu knows of the Yogo Curse flowing in his veins. In moments of dark humor he wonders which of his betrayals were fueled by the ancestral curse and which were fueled by his own ignorance. He often ponders what historians would make of his story. He looks at the despicable crimes he has

committed recently, and wonders if he will be remembered as someone without bushido, without honor, and without a family. He wonders if he will be able to serve his adopted father Yoritomo without failing him.

He wonders if it is already too late to change his destiny.

BAYUSHI ARAMASU

Male human Mantis Nin2/Sam3: CR 5; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 2d6 +3d10 +10; hp 26; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (touch 11, flat-footed 19); Atk +2 katana +7 melee, 1d10 + 4 damage; SQ Class skill — Diplomacy (family bonus), Ninja Dodge +1, Poison Use, Sneak Attack 1d6; Honor: 1; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 12, Cha 15; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Dojo: Dojo of the Red Crane; **Kata:** None

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Rokugani), Bluff +7, Climb +4, Diplomacy +10, Intimidate +4, Listen +5, Sense Motive +9; Armor Focus (lamellar armor), Different Schools (Scorpion), Way of the Scorpion, Void Use

Possessions: +2 katana, wakizashi, +2 lamellar armor, cloak of stealth (as cloak of elvenkind)

BAYUSHI ARAMASU

Earth: 2

Stamina: 3

Water: 3

Fire: 4

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Shosuro Assassin 1; Yoritomo Bushi 1

Dojo: Dojo of the Red Crane

Kata: None

Glory: 1.4

Status: 5.4

Honor: 1.2

Advantages: Liar, Multiple Schools, Ninja Heritage

Disadvantages: Yogo Curse

Skills: Athletics 4, Climbing 2, Defense 4, Explosives 3, Hisomu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Kuenai 3, Ninjutsu 2, Poison 4, Sleight of Hand 2, Stealth 3

very quickly after his gempukku. As the third son of his family there was no possibility of his receiving a high post, such as the Imperial Court or a clan champion's court. He would no doubt be sent to a minor daimyo's castle where he would spend the remainder of his days. He would wed an important (but no doubt dull) courtier in the court and thus gain his father and his brothers some fame. It looked like a boring future.

He told his family he would undertake a *musha shugyo* before he accepted his post. They agreed, believing that a year without Imperial privileges would cure his pugnacious nature. He left without anyone barring his way, and wandered through the Phoenix and Lion lands looking for adventure. He arrived at Shiro Mirumoto with no expectations. The Dragon lands were the last place he expected he would find what he was looking for.

At night he walked in the courtyard of the castle, when suddenly the Dragon Clan Champion appeared in front of him. He bowed, honored by her presence. She spoke to him of a higher cause, of serving Rokugan's future and of power beyond imagination. Kosha was tempted by her words and told her it was to his liking. She led him to the newly christened Kyuden Hitomi and into the tattooing chambers. He exited the room as Hitomi Kobai.

He became the voice of the Lady outside of the Dragon lands. He constantly travels to other lords' castles and speaks in the name of the Dragon Clan Champion. The Kitsuki continued their duties as the ambassadors of the Dragon Clan, but when Hitomi wants a reliable messenger to give a more personal message, she turns to Kobai. He is honored and happy to perform these duties for her, and has never failed her trust.

When the accursed Naga began to attack the Dragon lands, the Lady sent Kobai to the Imperial Court to offer the Imperial Regent rice for the aid of the Imperial Legions. He performed admirably, of course, and the courtier training of his past life aided him immensely. He recognized his eldest brother Izo and his youngest brother Ryo, but they did not recognize him. This pleased him immensely. He pitied his foolish brothers, who devoted their entire lives to

HITOMI KOBAI, THE LADY'S HITODEN

Kobai can barely remember his life before his service in the name of the Lady. How did he ever live without the blessings of the Lady, without standing in her presence? He scorns the man he had been before he swore allegiance to the Dragon and devoted his life to Lady Hitomi.

He was once Otomo Kosha, third son of a minor courtier in the Imperial Court. As a young boy Kosha loved to run in the gardens and fight with the other boys of the castle. When he grew up he was chastised for his boyish tendencies and forced inside to study the intricacies of the court.

Kosha grew bored of his life



insignificant squabbles about taxes and the letter of the law, while he was helping the Lady shape Rokugan. He left the court reaffirmed by his decision and without regret.

He is fanatically devoted to the Lady and will do anything in his power to further her cause. He is generally a calm and sensible man, but becomes exceedingly violent if anyone insults the Lady or her actions. Once, two Mirumoto samurai guarding the walls of Kyuden Hitomi questioned her sanity where Kobai could hear. Three kikage zumi had to force him away from the unconscious and broken men before he could throw them over the walls. After the incident everyone began to whisper about Kobai the "hitodenashi," or brute. When Kobai heard the nickname, he proudly picked up the insult and bore it as a title. To him, the title projects the strength of his devotion.

Only one thing about his new life in Kyuden Hitomi irks Kobai. The Tainted madman Hitomi Kokujin should be hunted down and killed, but enjoys the Lady's protection. He hopes that Kokujin will not be the Lady's downfall, and watches Kokujin's every move with a critical eye. He swears the tattooed madman will not disrupt the Lady's plans. He will personally make sure of it.

HITOMI KOBAI

Male human Dragon Mnk 6: CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d8 +10; hp 26; Init +2; Spd 50 ft.; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 14); Atk unarmed strike +8 melee, 1d8 +4 damage; SQ Class skill – Knowledge (Arcana)(family bonus), Evasion, Fast Movement, Purity of Body, Still Mind, Slow Fall (30 ft.); Honor: 1; AL CG; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 11; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 2 in.

Dojo: Kyuden Hitomi; **Kata:** None

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Rokugani), Battle +4, Bluff +6, Climb +4, Diplomacy +10, Escape Artist +4, Listen +5, Sense Motive +11; Improved Unarmed Strike, Kaze-do Novice, Kaze-do Intermediate, Tattoo (Blaze, Centipede), Versatile (Battle, Bluff) Void Use

Possessions: amulet of natural armor +2, monk's obi (monk's belt), ring of protection +2

HITOMI KOBAI

Earth: 3

Water: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: Hitomi Kikage Zumi 2

Dojo: Kyuden Hitomi

Kata: None

Tattoos: Blaze, Centipede

Glory: 4.8

Status: 4.2

Honor: 1.7

Advantages: Hands of Stone, Kaze-do Novice, Kaze-do Intermediate, Voice

Disadvantages: Ascetic, Dark Fate

Skills: Athletics 4, Escape Artist 3, Climbing 2, Defense 3, Kaze-do 3, Lore (kikage zumi) 3, Meditation 3, Shintao 3, Stealth 3

CULT OF THE DESTROYER, ACT 2: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

"She is the Progeny of the Destroyer — a child of absolute godly destruction. If you can destroy her before she consumes enough souls, you will save your Empire a million deaths."

— Feydn Rafiq, Assassin

Act 2 of Cult of the Destroyer introduces the PCs to a central character of the campaign: Feydn Rafiq. While it is not necessary to have played through Act 1 to play through Act 2, it is strongly recommended.

BACKGROUND

The Cult of the Destroyer is feared throughout much of the world, from the Ivory Kingdoms it calls home, to the Burning Sands in the north, and across the oceans to nations that Rokugan has never heard of. Its members are powerful: many are blessed with the power of Shiva the Destroyer, and even one of the goddess' avatars is an active member in the Cult.

Feydn Rafiq, assassin for the Cult, has a problem. He wishes to control the Cult, yet he has no way to do so. He is a member of House Rafiq, essentially a front for the Cult to gain political legitimacy, but he cannot seize control of the house without sufficient reason. His house's lords are spreading the cult's resources quite thin, and still they press for the Cult to destroy the Seppun. When this happens, thus proving that no one is beyond the Destroyer's reach, the Cult will have claimed a significant victory in every major country in the world. This does not sit well with Feydn, as he has a plan. He believes that he can get the political leverage he needs to take over the Cult's leadership if this incursion into Rokugan fails, and so has been working against his superiors' orders for some time now.

Feydn is no fool, and he recognizes that he needs Rokugani pawns, as he certainly cannot stop the whole organization by himself. After the group's handling (in Act 1) of counter-Cult activities, Feydn believes they might be the key to helping him remove the Cult from Rokugan. To that end, Feydn needs to earn the trust of the PCs, so that he can turn them against some of the more influential Cultists. He released a demon, Anata, to rampage through the countryside, and is looking to enlist Rokugani pawns to destroy her and prove himself to be a trustworthy person.

SYNOPSIS

The PCs are contacted by Feydn Rafiq, who asks them for help. Anata, the Progeny of the Destroyer, is on the loose in Rokugan, and Feydn needs the PCs' help to stop her. He approaches them with a deal they cannot honorably refuse, and shows them how to kill her. The PCs track and destroy her, and this path takes them through a village of slain peasants. After this, they are greeted by Feydn Rafiq, who tries to reward them, and from there the PCs move on to their next adventure.

NOTABLE NPCS IN ACT 2

FEYDN RAFIQ, IVORY KINGDOMS ASSASSIN

Feydn Rafiq is a cunning and ambitious man. Though he has served the Cult of the Destroyer his whole life, he considers his current supervisors to be unworthy of leadership positions. Thus, he plans to depose them (see the Background for his plan).

Under House Rafiq's leadership, Feydn could lead the Cult to unparalleled heights of devastation, starting with laying waste to Rokugan. He abhors inefficiency, and feels that the current plot is nothing more than a warning that the Cult is coming. This, he cannot abide.

Feydn, although filled with hatred, can mask it perfectly when the need suits him. Truthfully, he wishes nothing more than to destroy everything around him, and let the world burn for the glory of Shiva, but he is patient. He is capable of biding his time, waiting, and plotting.

Role-playing notes: Feydn plays a dangerous game, sending the PCs after his Cult. He is very careful to treat them as friends, and to never drop the façade of helpfulness.

Mechanical notes: Feydn will make every effort to avoid combat, both against Anata and in other encounters. However, treat him as a warrior of approximately equal level to the PCs if he is forced into combat. Consider him a Scorpion bushi to approximate his fighting style.

ANATA, PROGENY OF THE DESTROYER

Anata appears to be a beautiful young woman of nineteen. This is an illusion, and any mystical form of vision would see her true form: a six-armed, clawed woman with immense teeth and a monstrous visage. She is a daughter of Kali-Ma, who is an avatar of the goddess Shiva the Destroyer, the object of the Cult's worship. Both feral and highly dangerous, the beautiful-woman illusion vanishes when she gets angry. She does not speak Rokugani, nor does she care to. She views all humans, and most other races, as mere prey. She cooperates with the Cultists, and specifically with Feydn in this endeavor. She has no conception that he could betray her.

Even for her kind, Anata is a monster. She feeds on humans as all her kind does, but she does so with relish. She tortures for fun, and she thrives in the atmosphere of fear that she brings.

Role-playing notes: Anata cannot speak Rokugani, and would not even if she could. She will try to kill the PCs as soon as she can, without barter or parley.

PROGENY OF THE DESTROYER

D20 MECHANICS

CR: 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8 +

20 (29 hp); Init +2 Spd 30 ft; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural); Attacks: 6 claws +4 melee; Damage: Claw 1d4+2; Face/reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 5 ft.; SA: Claw attack; SQ: Darkvision 100 ft., Damage reduction 5/+1; Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 14; Skills: Climb +7, Hide 5, Intimidate 5, Listen 5; Feat: Multiattack

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Solitary

Treasure: None

Honor: 0

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

LSR RPG 2E MECHANICS

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Strength 4

Fire: 2

Agility 3

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Rolls when attacking: 4k3

Rolls for damage: 4k2

TN to be hit: 20

Carapace: 4

Wounds per level: 20: +5; 50: +15; 70: Dead

Claws

Progeny of the Destroyer have six claw attacks each round.

Nightsight

Progeny of the Destroyer can see in total darkness as well as they can see in daylight.

SCENE ONE: HEROIC OPPORTUNITIES

Scene One can take place in any city, but preferably shortly after the PCs finish Act 1. Obviously, if the PCs did not go through Act 1 it will be more difficult to arrange, but there are any number of reasons that Feydn would use the PCs anyway. As the PCs walk the streets, Feydn calls to them. Read the following:

As you travel through the streets of [NAME OF CITY], you hear a whisper calling your name from an alleyway. You turn to look, and you see someone beckoning to you. "Come here, samurai. I have urgent need of your assistance!"

Feydn simply wants to get their attention, and is not willing to risk conflict unless they threaten him. He will say anything appropriate to get the PCs to sit down and talk to him. Remember that he is posing as an ally here. He will try to draw the PCs to a room he has nearby so that they can talk privately. Read the following:

Once in the alley, the man draws back his hood and, you see by his strange features that he is gaijin! As if in response to your realization, the man hastily holds up a scroll, clearly marked as travel papers bearing the personal mon of your lord. "Be at ease, friends," he says quietly. "I am not here as an enemy."

The travel papers are legitimate, as Feydn killed an emissary from the characters' lord's court specifically to acquire them for this deception. The characters will doubtless have many questions, but Feydn waves them away, assuring them that his business is most urgent. When they are prepared to hear what he has to say, read the following:

"Do you know much of the Ivory Kingdoms, my home? Most of your people I suspect know very little. We are an noble and proud nation, like your Rokugan. But we also have our demons. Sadly, it seems that one of our demons, a monstrous woman-shaped fiend, came to your lands some time ago, but has recently woken up." He pauses to let his words sink in.

"No, I do not know how. One of our seers saw this occurrence and sent me to stop it. I fear that it has grown too powerful, and I cannot face it again. It is a child of our destroyer goddess, and like her mother, she possesses great power. It has slumbered here for some time, and now that it has awakened it will seek to destroy everything. I have heard of those in your land called Witch Hunters, who hunt down demons who threaten your countryside. My job is..." He stumbles, mumbling things in a strange language, as if searching for a phrase. After a brief pause, he gives up and continues: "destroyer of demons, much the same as your witch hunters. I hoped you could assist me in quietly and quickly dispatching this demon, before it consumes too many lives and grows ever stronger."

Feydn grossly exaggerates Anata's abilities and threat, though he tells the truth when he says that she is dangerous. If asked why he can't face the demon himself, he says the following: "She possesses the ability to kill with a single stroke anyone whose blood she has already tasted. I cannot fight her without dying instantly." If asked why he selected them, have Feydn mention one of their recent accomplishments (such as their victory in Act 1) and how much that impressed him. He offers a reward if they seem to need further persuasion: a small pouch of diamonds, which he shows them. More to the point, he agrees to help them search for an answer to the strange insignia they discovered in Act 1, an insignia that, ironically enough, is tattooed on Feydn's back, though the characters will never see it.

Once the PCs agree to kill this demon, he smiles and begins to track her down with the PCs in tow. He has no problems, if the PCs are suspicious, letting them track the demon. The PCs should have little trouble tracking her footprints.

SCENE TWO: DEEDS, NOT WORDS

The GM should feel free to throw in encounters with bandits, clan samurai, possibly even a servant of the Lying Darkness (as they are on the move at this time), in order to remind the players that more is going on than this simple hunt, as well as to break up the monotony of a single-minded journey. Feydn will keep as low a profile as possible, as he does not wish to provoke suspicion.

The characters finally track Anata to a small village, several day's journey from the city they began in. When they enter the village, read the following:

As you enter the village, you can smell death all around you. Fresh bodies lie strewn about carelessly, rent asunder by what appear to be claw wounds. The flies have moved in, but the bodies have not begun to decay yet. Then, you see why they have not: a young gaijin woman is stumbling through a pile of corpses, picking at them gleefully as she goes.

As you approach, she sniffs the air and then looks directly at you. She sees Feydn, and as she does so, you see her body shimmer and twist. She shouts something in a gaijin tongue, and Feydn responds. Seconds later, she transforms into a six-armed monstrous woman, with immense teeth and long claws at the end of each of her many hands and she charges you.

Anata says to Feydn, in the language of Ruhmal, that he has betrayed the Cult by releasing her and then bringing people to kill her. He responds to her, in the same language, that she was simply a tool in a much greater betrayal. If, after the battle, Feydn is asked what the two said, read the following:

"Roughly, she says 'Hunter! I will kill you now! My cult has deep roots here, and you will never escape!' so I said to her that it was time for her to finally die, as I have heroes with me now. I am very pleased that things worked out this way, though her words do trouble me. I must now investigate this cult she mentioned."

The fight with Anata is straightforward: she tries to defeat the PCs, they try to kill her. The PCs should have little trouble taking her out, though she may very well cause significant damage them. Feydn offers an ointment that will triple natural healing rates for a week if any PC is seriously injured.

When Anata finally lies dead, Feydn offers the promised diamonds to the group. The small bagful is worth approximately 200 koku. He also congratulates the characters on their victory. If prompted, he will diligently copy down the insignia the characters possess and vow to discover its meaning, wondering aloud if it has any link to the cult the demon mentioned only moments beforehand.

Feydn, of course, plotted everything from the start and is

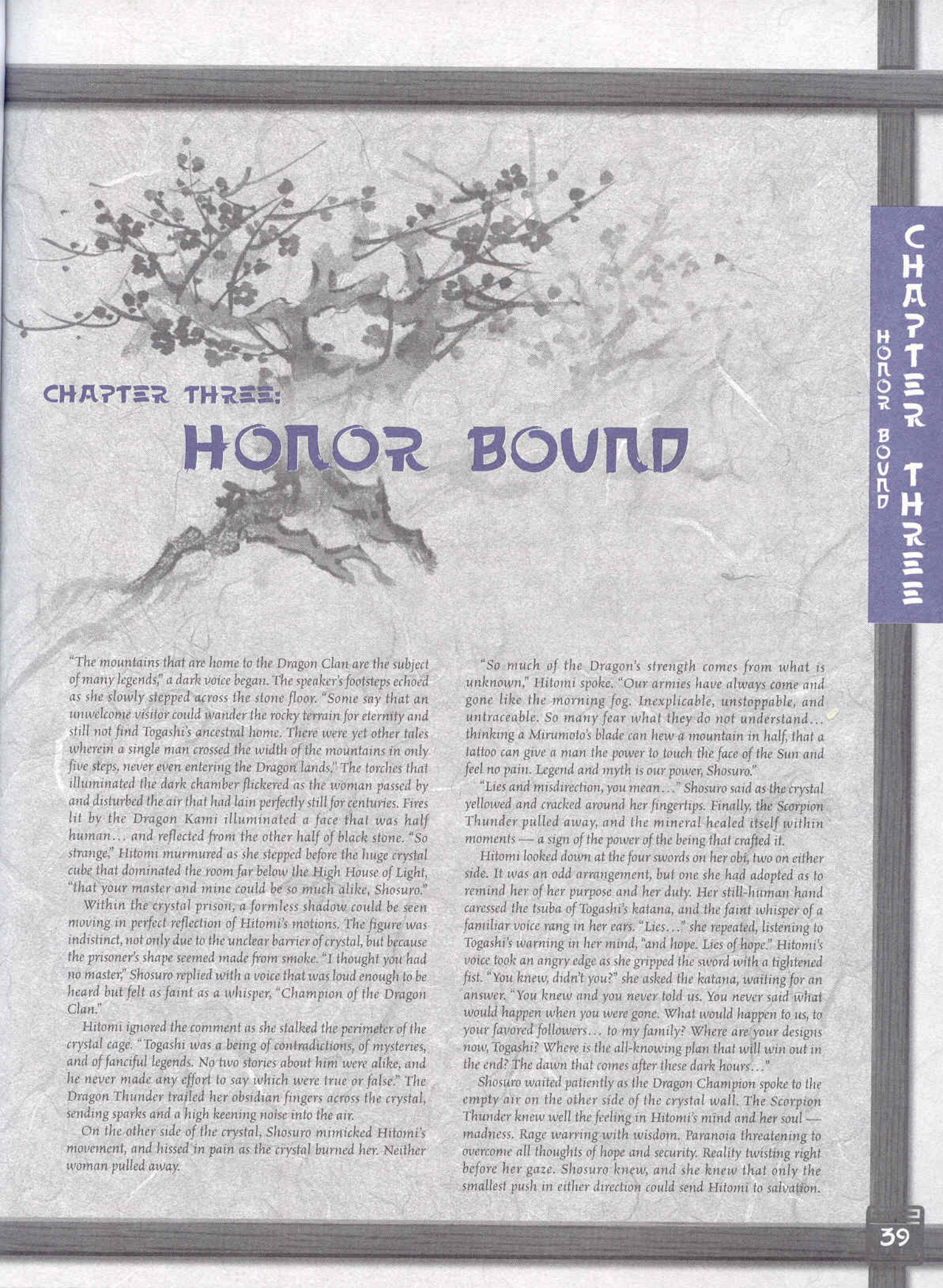
"Excellent, my friends! I am so pleased that I have found allies. The demon mentioned a cult, and so I must now take my leave to try to discover what she meant by such words.

I wish you all very well, and if I need help later, I will find you again!"

simply grooming them for a favor later on (see Act 5: Know the Evil). Still, the players should feel a sense of a job well done for stopping a threat to the Empire.

CHAPTER THREE:

HONOR BOUND



"The mountains that are home to the Dragon Clan are the subject of many legends," a dark voice began. The speaker's footsteps echoed as she slowly stepped across the stone floor. "Some say that an unwelcome visitor could wander the rocky terrain for eternity and still not find Togashi's ancestral home. There were yet other tales wherein a single man crossed the width of the mountains in only five steps, never even entering the Dragon lands." The torches that illuminated the dark chamber flickered as the woman passed by and disturbed the air that had lain perfectly still for centuries. Fires lit by the Dragon Kami illuminated a face that was half human... and reflected from the other half of black stone. "So strange," Hitomi murmured as she stepped before the huge crystal cube that dominated the room far below the High House of Light, "that your master and mine could be so much alike, Shosuro."

Within the crystal prison, a formless shadow could be seen moving in perfect reflection of Hitomi's motions. The figure was indistinct, not only due to the unclear barrier of crystal, but because the prisoner's shape seemed made from smoke. "I thought you had no master," Shosuro replied with a voice that was loud enough to be heard but felt as faint as a whisper, "Champion of the Dragon Clan."

Hitomi ignored the comment as she stalked the perimeter of the crystal cage. "Togashi was a being of contradictions, of mysteries, and of fanciful legends. No two stories about him were alike, and he never made any effort to say which were true or false." The Dragon Thunder trailed her obsidian fingers across the crystal, sending sparks and a high keening noise into the air.

On the other side of the crystal, Shosuro mimicked Hitomi's movement, and hissed in pain as the crystal burned her. Neither woman pulled away.

"So much of the Dragon's strength comes from what is unknown," Hitomi spoke. "Our armies have always come and gone like the morning fog. Inexplicable, unstoppable, and untraceable. So many fear what they do not understand... thinking a Mirumoto's blade can hew a mountain in half, that a tattoo can give a man the power to touch the face of the Sun and feel no pain. Legend and myth is our power, Shosuro."

"Lies and misdirection, you mean..." Shosuro said as the crystal yellowed and cracked around her fingertips. Finally, the Scorpion Thunder pulled away, and the mineral healed itself within moments — a sign of the power of the being that crafted it.

Hitomi looked down at the four swords on her obi, two on either side. It was an odd arrangement, but one she had adopted as to remind her of her purpose and her duty. Her still-human hand caressed the tsuba of Togashi's katana, and the faint whisper of a familiar voice rang in her ears. "Lies..." she repeated, listening to Togashi's warning in her mind, "and hope. Lies of hope." Hitomi's voice took an angry edge as she gripped the sword with a tightened fist. "You knew, didn't you?" she asked the katana, waiting for an answer. "You knew and you never told us. You never said what would happen when you were gone. What would happen to us, to your favored followers... to my family? Where are your designs now, Togashi? Where is the all-knowing plan that will win out in the end? The dawn that comes after these dark hours..."

Shosuro waited patiently as the Dragon Champion spoke to the empty air on the other side of the crystal wall. The Scorpion Thunder knew well the feeling in Hitomi's mind and her soul — madness. Rage warring with wisdom. Paranoia threatening to overcome all thoughts of hope and security. Reality twisting right before her gaze. Shosuro knew, and she knew that only the smallest push in either direction could send Hitomi to salvation.

Or into an endless fall.

"Lies of hope?" Shosuro repeated, pretending not to hear the Dragon's continued whispers of anger and betrayal and the hands of her Kami.

Hitomi's eyes snapped away from the swords and onto Shosuro. "Failed promises do not mean the end of hope," she said, taking a step closer to the fallen Thunder. "You should know that, Bayushi's Daughter. You know failure, do you not? You know that even in the darkest hour, you could deny the Darkness its prize, and that is why you came to my... why you came to Togashi." Hitomi stopped herself from calling Togashi her master, though she knew Shosuro had noticed. "Bayushi promised to protect you, did he not? But yet you endured even when that lie was revealed for what it was."

It was Shosuro's voice that grew angry now. "Do not speak of Bayushi, slave of destiny," the dark figure hissed. "You understand nothing."

Hitomi smiled thinly. "No... I do not understand Nothing," she said coolly. "I have come to you for that, Shosuro. Perhaps from our two failures, a new hope can be born. We can bring truth from these lies, after all these years."

Shosuro had waited for this moment. The anger on her face, as real as anything she had felt before the touch of the Darkness, remained to hide her satisfaction at the Dragon's words. "What would you ask of me, then?"

"Show me how to control the Darkness," Hitomi said flatly. "It has brought madness and despair on you, but it cannot be anything more complicated than a weapon. Those who can understand the blade are never truly threatened by it."

"A quote from Niten, Dragon?" Shosuro said, laughing lowly. "You ask to control a sword quite unlike those ever known by Mirumoto."

"The Way cannot be one thing," Hitomi replied.

"Shinsei, now," the Scorpion mused. "For the leader of such a wise Clan, you seem to have no wisdom of your own — merely wisdom stolen from others."

"I will show you wisdom, Scorpion," Hitomi growled, pressing her obsidian hand against the crystal. Pausing for a moment, she exerted her will upon Shosuro with the power of the dark stone. She had not fully learned how the Obsidian Hand was connected to the Lying Darkness, but the fact remained she could use it against Shosuro.

The Scorpion Thunder flinched in surprise as she felt herself animated against her will. "What..." she began, but stopped speaking as Hitomi invaded her mind.

Show me, Hitomi commanded Shosuro's corrupted spirit. Show me the secrets of the Darkness, Thunder. Show me how to make the servants of the Nothing bleed.

The wills of two Thunders clashed as Hitomi slowly forced Shosuro to show her the history of the Lying Darkness, the way it endured through the centuries, and what could be used against it. Years and information unfolded before the Dragon Champion in the span of mere seconds, and Hitomi found herself overwhelmed by what she saw.

As Hitomi's will was distracted by the visions Shosuro grudgingly shared with her, the Scorpion reached out with her mind and spoke through the bond she shared with Hitomi. She searched out for the scrap of the Lying Darkness' influence that remained in the Obsidian Hand. Ever so carefully, she searched Hitomi's mind just as her own was pillaged, until...

There.

Hitomi gasped as she realized her folly, but it was too late. As if by its own will, the Obsidian Hand reached back from the crystal and then smashed against it with the force of a Thunder, the power of the Darkness, and the cunning of a Scorpion. The crystal shattered under the weight of the blow, and Shosuro sprang from her prison, her formless body growing countless limbs to assail the Dragon Champion.

Hitomi staggered back, drawing her own blades and steadying her-

self as she parried, slashed, and dodged the limitless attacks that threatened her life. The two Thunders clashed now with their strength where they had before with their minds.

Unlike the previous confrontation, though, Hitomi did not dare underestimate her opponent's power. Slowly, the Dragon Champion cleaved and cut through the Scorpion's form and advanced step after step.

Shosuro narrowed her eyes as Hitomi narrowed the gap between them. She was too weak, too dazed from over a thousand years of imprisonment and a sudden release. She had hoped to slay the Dragon Champion here and now, but the task would have to wait. She would have her revenge on Hitomi — and through her, Togashi — for promising her salvation that could never come. Shosuro surprised Hitomi with a fierce blow to her knee, sending the Dragon staggering for just a moment, which was all the time Shosuro needed to draw her form back into itself and vanish into the myriad shadows of the chamber.

Hitomi stood, biting back a scream of rage as she saw her foe had disappeared entirely. The power of the Obsidian Hand told her Shosuro had not just hidden herself, but instead left entirely.

"My Lady!" came a cry from the stairwell, and one of the kikage zumi stepped into the light of the room. His eyes flickered for a moment in the direction of the broken prison, then he knelt and cast his gaze to the floor before his Champion.

"Speak," Hitomi growled, not taking her eyes from the shadows.

"The Naga, my Lady. They have come within a day's march of your palace."

The Dragon Champion sheathed her swords as she replied, "And Hoshi?"

"Togashi's son is among the invaders still, my Lady."

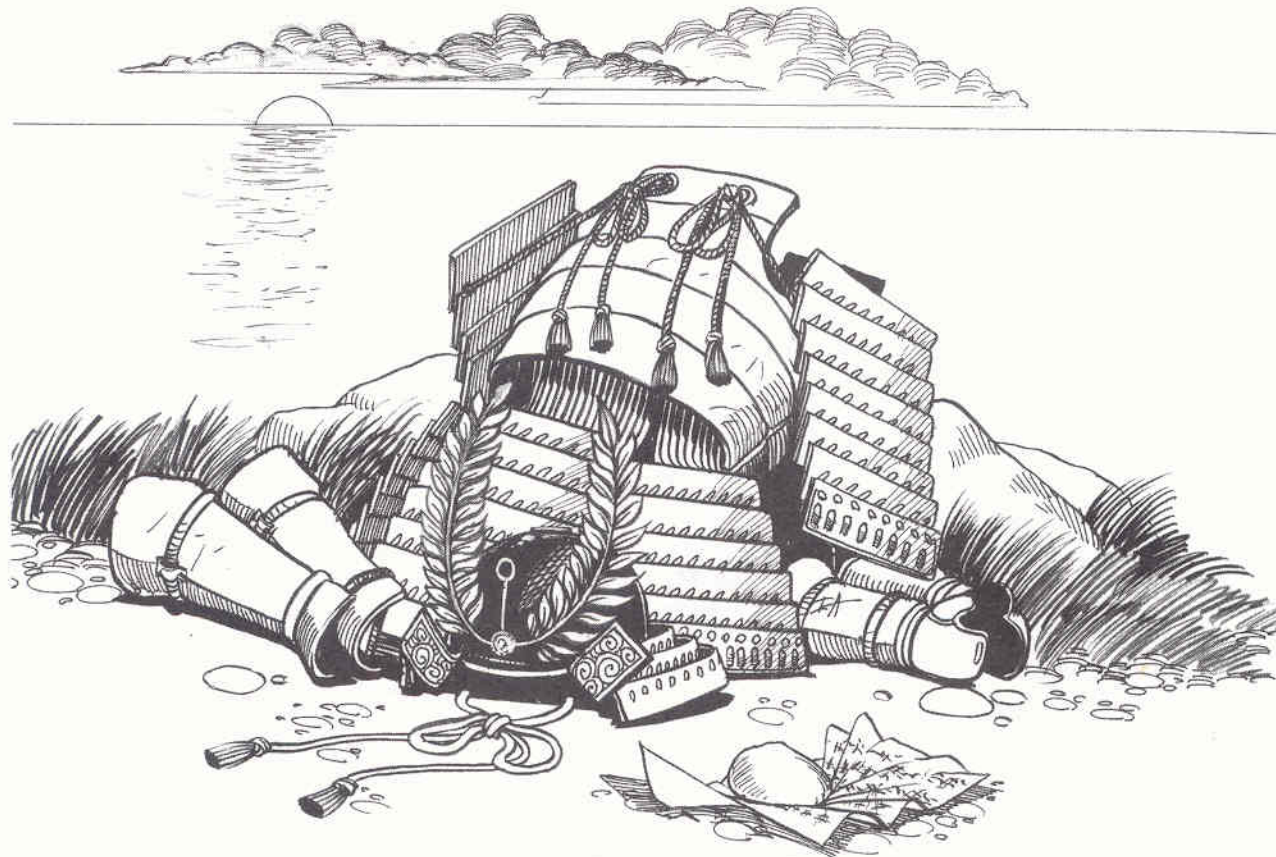
Hitomi considered for a moment, then began to walk back towards the stairs. "We are done with this game, my chosen," she said. "We are done merely buying time. Order your brothers and sisters to our home. It is time we show the upstart Hoshi and his allies the true fury of the Dragon."

HONOR BOUND - TIMELINE

YEAR 1132,
MONTH OF
THE MONKEY
(LATE SUMMER)

RODRIGO SEARCHES FOR THE MASKS

Amid the growing chaos, few notice just one more would-be bandit lord — even when that bandit's attacks very obviously favor certain targets. A ronin known as Rodrigo systematically raids Phoenix and Crab caravans. Compared to the other conflicts in the Empire, most magistrates take little note of the bandit. It is only months later that it becomes clear to both the Phoenix and the Crab that Rodrigo's attacks were hardly opportunistic, and he was in fact searching for clues to the locations of the porcelain masks that unlock Iuchiban's tomb.



Rodrigo cares nothing for Iuchiban, knowing only that he will be rewarded handsomely by Iuchi Shahai. After it becomes clear what Rodrigo seeks, he becomes a prime target for both the Asako Inquisitors and the Kuni *sukai-sagasu*. The bandit lord is swiftly found and executed, though Shahai takes a step closer to her goal.

FALLEN THUNDER

For months, Hida Yakamo has languished in the custody of Moto Tsume and Kuni Yori. The two madmen have done their best to torture Yakamo into submission, hoping to turn him into a willing servant of Fu Leng. The Jade Hand is cut from the Crab Thunder's arm and cast into the Black Finger River. Yakamo is beaten and dragged back into the depths of Fu Leng's realm. Yakamo finally finds escape when his torturers grow overzealous and kill him.

CRANE FIGHTS CRANE

Urged by minions of the Darkness posing as his advisors, Crane Champion Doji Kuwanan orders the death of Daidoji Uji for his insubordination. Likewise counseled by false words, many Crane rally to Uji's side and declare that it is Kuwanan that has dishonored the spirit of the Crane by wasting lives in an assault against the Mantis. The Asahina family sends counselors to intervene peacefully, but these are slain by the Darkness en route. The Shadow even goes so far as to send news of the slain priests to the two Crane lords, shifting blame to the other with each telling. Further enraged by the perceived treachery of the other, both men order their armies into a full-scale civil war.

THE GIFT OF THE EMPEROR

Seemingly heedless of the strife that has enveloped his Empire, Toturi I declares a grand tournament for his

amusement. He commands every Clan to send forth their mightiest warriors in order to receive a single favor from the Imperial Throne to be chosen by the victor. Though many are confused by the Emperor's actions, it is the Darkness that is to blame for the strange edict. Attempting to use its influence over the Emperor, the Darkness plans to prolong the chaos in Rokugan by taking key figures from the front lines of conflict. However, few of the clans actually send their honored leaders, and the contest is attended by the Emperor's court and only the bare minimum of guests. Unbeknownst to the Emperor or the Empire at large, the Dragon and the Scorpion use this event to enact a daring scheme — to use the Emperor's own gift to reinstate the banished Scorpion Clan. Mirumoto Uso and Bayushi Aramoro (disguised as a ronin) confront each other as the final competitors after the day's tournament. The fight is fierce, but merely a show. In the end, Uso falls before the "ronin" who in turn requests all of the empty lands of the Scorpion as his own. The Emperor agrees. Bayushi Aramoro then replaces his trademark mask and declares himself lord of the Scorpion Clan. In the wake of the Scorpion's victory, plots and rumors begin immediately, however. How can a single man hold the lands of his Clan, even with allies among the Dragon?

A NEW CHAMPION

Hida O-Ushi assumes the title of Crab Clan Champion. Though it pains her to admit that her brother is truly dead, she can no longer deny her clan a leader in such troubling times.

SANZO'S TRIUMPH

Wielding the Bloodsword, Ambition, the ronin Sanzo hunts down the band of ogres that murdered his family long ago and slaughters them all. Though Sanzo is elated by his victory, he is also greatly troubled by the whispers that issue from the sword, encouraging him to destroy "their" enemies... but Sanzo has no more enemies.

MESSAGE FROM THE THIRD WHISKER

A Third Whisker Scout manages to gain an audience with Crab Champion Hida O-Ushi, delivering news of the attack on Hiruma Castle and the disappearance of Hida Yakamo. Though greatly disturbed by the news, O-Ushi knows she cannot fight a war on two fronts against the Lion and Horde. With a heavy heart, she decides that the Crab lands cannot stand unprotected, and leaves Hiruma Castle to its fate.

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE ROOSTER (EARLY FALL)

FAMINE

With the vast fields of the Crab and Unicorn left untended and the lands of the Crane scourged by war, Rokugan enters a sudden famine. Rice is in scant supply, and even the ocean seems inexplicably barren. With nearly all the clans marching in war once again, existing stores of food quickly dwindle, and many soldiers find their campaigns brought to a sudden halt. It is not long before the "civilized" battles between the clans deteriorate into rabid pillaging and looting in order to survive.

SHOSURO IS RELEASED

Guided by whispers from the Obsidian Hand and knowledge gained from the libraries of the Dragon, Hitomi travels deep into the bowels of the High House of Light and confronts a soul as ancient as the Empire — Shosuro. Maddened by the Lying Darkness, Shosuro begged Togashi for mercy centuries ago and was locked away in a cage of pure crystal. Though the prison did nothing to cure her madness, it did prevent the Darkness from completely controlling her. Hitomi confronts the imprisoned Thunder, thinking that Shosuro can show her a way to control restore balance within herself. Hitomi underestimates the situation, however, and frees Shosuro. The corrupted Scorpion Thunder escapes to do the bidding of the ever-expanding Darkness. Hitomi realizes the mistake she has made in seeking answers from others, but even as she does so, Kokujin steals Togashi's daisho and flees the castle.

THE NAGA STORM MURUMOTO MOUNTAIN

Days after Hitomi's failure in dealing with Shosuro, the Naga finally advance into the heart of Dragon lands and begin to cut off all paths to Kyuden Hitomi. The Naga's final attack on the castle is halted when the Imperial Legions reach the area and immediately strike at the Naga. With some within the Legions already tainted by the touch of the Lying Darkness, the Naga do not hesitate to counterattack, and the ensuing battle is savage. Eventually the Naga are forced into retreat by the Legions who use their pearl magic to transport their army at unnatural speed.

While the Naga are distracted by the Emperor's army, Hoshi and his remaining followers storm Kyuden Hitomi, where they find the Dragon Champion expecting him. There

are no words between Hitomi and Hoshi as the woman draws her swords and attacks Togashi's son. The fight is brief, as Hoshi strikes Hitomi with a powerful blow but instead turns it aside at the last moment to leave her with little more than a small cut. Hitomi raises her sword to strike Hoshi through the heart, but then realizes what she is about to do. Hitomi ceases her attack and walks away, leaving Hoshi to reclaim his father's throne.

CRAB ATTACK THE NAGA

The Naga return to the edge of Crab lands, intending to resume the alliance they had offered to that clan. The Naga are attacked on sight by a small patrol of enraged Crab warriors, and reinforcements quickly begin to arrive. Still weary from their battle with the Imperial Legions, the Naga are quickly pushed back into the borders of the Shinomen Forest. Though the Crab are not foolish enough to pursue their enemies into the Naga homeland, they refuse to give up on their vengeance. In a moment of rage, one Hida commander orders the Shinomen to be set on fire, and soon a blazing forest is added to the chaos that engulfs the Empire.

LION AND CRAB ON THE WALL

The resolve of the Lion brings them into the lands of the Crab, where Hida O-Ushi and her army are prepared to crush the invaders. As the two Champions meet face to face, it rapidly becomes apparent that neither truly wishes conflict and that the Lion are here to offer aid. Neither can say why they were so misled, other than some third party obviously wished to prevent O-Ushi from aiding the Crab at Hiruma Castle. Tsunuri vows to help O-Ushi retake the castle, and the armies of the Lion unite with the armies of the Crab. The two most powerful armies in Rokugan march side by side into the Shadowlands, devastating any of Yori's minions who dare block their path.

RETURN OF SHINJO

From the northern border of the Empire comes a vast army led by purple banners, Scorpion colors... and a Kami. Shinjo returns to Rokugan after centuries of imprisonment by the Lying Darkness, leading the Scorpion from their exile and the tribal Moto warriors from the Burning Sands. Shinjo's return brings hope back to the Unicorn Clan, having just suffered a staggering defeat at the hands of a Tainted Lion army. The Scorpion quickly return to their lands, and the Moto bolster the diminished numbers of the Unicorn Clan. News of Shinjo's return spreads like wildfire, and hundreds of wandering samurai flock to the lands of the Unicorn to see the return of a child of Sun and Moon.

REINSTATEMENT OF THE SCORPION

Though weary from their trials in the Burning Sands, the Scorpion do not hesitate to return to their long-deserted lands and begin restoring order. Though the Emperor does not technically remove their status as exiles, by this time the sheer size of the Scorpion and Unicorn armies make Toturi's few remaining supporters loath to dispute the Scorpion's place in the Empire. The Scorpion go about calling in the countless favors owed them by houses throughout Rokugan, and it is not long before the castles of the Bayushi, Shosuro, Yogo, and Soshi are well on their way to being restored to their former glory.

Soon after their return, Bayushi Yojiro arrives at Kyuden Bayushi. Many among his clan greet him with resentment and anger, for Yojiro did not accompany them to the Burning Sands. Now this makes twice he has avoided exile while his clan suffered, but Kachiko invites him into her presence. Yojiro presents her with Itsuwari, the ancestral sword of the clan, which he has protected since her husband Shoji requested he do so before the Scorpion Coup. Kachiko sincerely thanks Yojiro for his service, and curses all those who doubted the magistrate. It was Yojiro who truly suffered, enduring the hatred of not only those who distrusted the Scorpion but of his own clan as well, all for the honor of his lord's blade.

YEAR 1132 MONTH OF THE DOG (LATE FALL)

THE MANTIS TAKE KYUDEN ASAKO

Yoritomo marches to the gates of Kyuden Asako, demanding that the Phoenix recognize his offer of assistance. The Mantis Champion declares that with the onset of famine and the broken power of the Phoenix, it would be a crime against the Emperor's Law to allow the peasantry to suffer when the Mantis could assist. Shiba Tsukune refuses Yoritomo's offer, seeing it as the thinly-veiled invasion that it is. The Mantis attack the castle, breaking through the meager Phoenix defenses with few casualties. Kyuden Asako is quickly captured, and Yoritomo brings forth two small shipments of food from the Mantis Isles to be divided amongst the people. Faced by the Mantis' wrath and the mercy they have shown, the Phoenix can do little else but surrender the land to Mantis rule and plan from the far recesses of the Isawa provinces.

THE SCORPION AND THE DARKNESS

As the Scorpion reclaim their lands and resources, they send word to those who would listen — they promise to reveal the hidden secrets of the unnamed force that has drowned Rokugan in chaos. Though many Clans hesitantly send ambassadors to hear the Scorpion's words, the Dragon, Phoenix, and Unicorn commit themselves fully to heeding the Bayushi family's wisdom and implementing it. The Scorpion explain what they can of the Lying Darkness, its history, its power... and its weaknesses. What details the Scorpion cannot provide are explained by the histories of the tribal Moto or the studies of the Kitsuki family. Armed with a new knowledge of their enemy, the Scorpion and Unicorn begin to amass an army to break the Darkness' hold on Otosan Uchi. The Dragon emissaries carry the Scorpion's knowledge back to Kyuden Hitomi, and their new Champion. Though the Phoenix promise whatever aid they can offer, there is little power they can afford to take away from repelling the Mantis invasion. One sad fact, however, becomes clear — the Emperor has become a pawn of the Darkness, and he must be dealt with directly.

THE GREAT SEA SPIDER AWAKENS

Fueled by the hatred of the Crane Clan and summoned by a cursed artifact, the Great Sea Spider stirs from its ancient slumber. The ocean along Rokugan's shores boil as the spider's venom pollutes the water. Masses of dead fish wash upon the shores, poisoning many starving peasants. Trade ships moving precious foodstuffs are sunk or obliterated by the ravenous spider.

OKURA NO ONI IS RELEASED

Seeking tribute for its victory over the Unicorn, Akuma no Oni confronts Kitsu Okura and demands the Jade Champion give his name to an oni that will serve the Oni Lord. Cornered by his own twisted ideals of honor, Okura agrees the bargain must be fulfilled and summons an oni from the depths of Jigoku and grants it his name. Unbeknownst to the Jade Champion, the summoning is aided by Akuma no Oni's raw power, and a much more powerful demon is summoned than Okura anticipated. The newly-formed oni overwhelms the Kitsu's will with little effort, and steals his name and soul in a matter of moments. Kitsu Okura's soul is sent screaming into the depths of Jigoku, leaving Okura's body a twisted husk. Hatred, darkness, and a failed Lion's fury give birth to Akuma's new daughter.

WHAT'S NEW

FU LENG'S SKULL

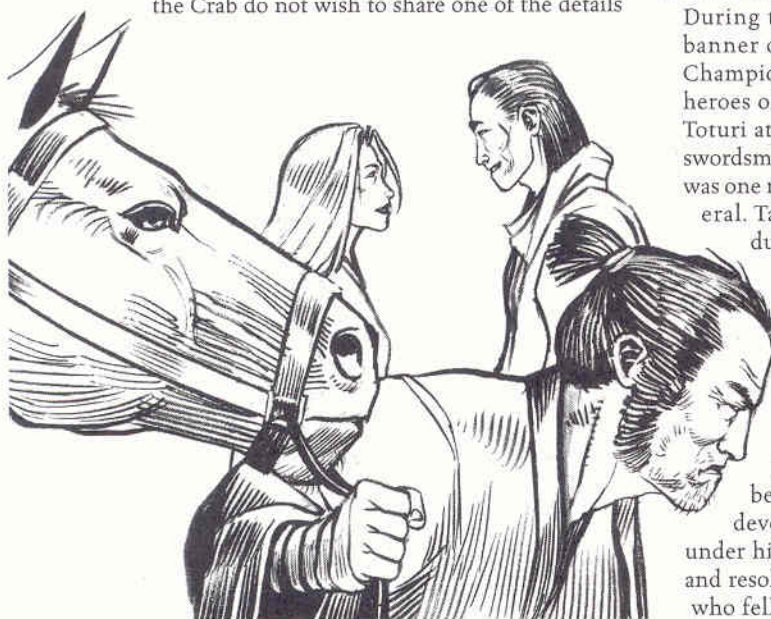
When the Seven Thunders finally defeated Fu Leng a second time, they left the bloodied court chambers of the last Hantei Emperor to see to the battle that raged around Otosan Uchi. When the city was once again secure, the leaders of the Clans returned to dispose of Fu Leng's body, only to find the severed head missing. The Skull of Fu Leng was stolen from the scene of his defeat by Kuni Yori, who vowed to avenge his master by uniting the forces of the Shadowlands and leading them past the Kaiu Wall again some day. With the Skull as proof of Fu Leng's favor, the fallen Kuni daimyo set about doing just that...

Fu Leng's Skull is a Major Artifact that carries the Shadowlands Taint. Whoever carries the Skull must make checks against contracting the Shadowlands Taint as if he were within the Shadowlands. The Taint of the artifact is so powerful that any attempts to detect the Shadowlands Taint will detect the Skull if it is within twice the normal range of the detection effect. When carried by a creature that does not naturally have the Shadowlands Taint, the Skull allows the bearer to add his Taint score to any damage rolls he makes (from weapons or spells) and heals the bearer of a number of Hit Points equal to his Taint Score every minute. This healing effect will return a dead being to life, but if it does so on a formerly living creature, the creature is now undead. When held by a creature with a natural Taint score (such as the undead), the Skull grants all of the previous effects, plus a DR of 20/-.

Fu Leng's skull carries the Shadowlands Taint and forces its bearer to roll against contracting the Shadowlands Taint as if he were within the Shadowlands. The Taint of the artifact is so powerful that any attempts to detect the Shadowlands Taint will detect the Skull if it is within twice the normal range of the detection effect. When carried by a creature that does not naturally have the Shadowlands Taint, the Skull allows the bearer to add his Taint Rank to any damage dice he rolls (from weapons or spells) and heals the bearer of a number of Wounds equal to his Taint Rank every minute. This healing effect will return a dead being to life, causing living bearers to return as walking dead. When held by a creature with a native Shadowlands Taint (such as the undead), the Skull grants a Carapace rating of 7.

THE THIRD MASK

The Kaiu histories do not record the exact details of Iuchiban's Tomb or its construction, though most reason it is because the Crab do not wish such information to fall into the wrong hands. While this is part of the reason, it is also due to the fact the Crab do not wish to share one of the details



of the Tomb's design — namely that Asahina Yajinden, Iuchiban's chief lieutenant crafted it. Only the Bloodspeaker's favored artisan knew the secrets that would trap the soul of Iuchiban, and Yajinden was glad to see his master entombed. Because of the unique design of the Tomb, however, the keys to open it were equally influenced by Yajinden's hand. The dark Crane crafted four porcelain masks and infused them with the most powerful curses he could forge. Each of these Masks held minor powers of their own due to the nature of the maho that powered them, but their true purpose was to ensure Iuchiban remained confined for all time. Of all the Masks, the Third Mask was the first to slip out of the Crab's stewardship, and it has passed from one cursed owner to another, each never recognizing the dark artifact they held until it was too late.

The Third Mask of Iuchiban is a Major Artifact that carries the Shadowlands Taint. From all outward appearances, the mask appears as nothing more than a finely crafted,

ancient and ornate porcelain mask. The face of the mask is fixed in a smile, though a tear of dark red ink falls from the right eye. Anyone wearing the Mask gains +10 to their Charisma score, but any time the wearer uses his Charisma bonus on a roll, there is a 10% chance the roll automatically fails unless he chooses to gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint.

The Third Mask of Iuchiban carries the Shadowlands Taint. From all outward signs, the mask appears as nothing more than a finely crafted, ancient and ornate porcelain mask. The face of the mask is fixed in a smile, though a tear of dark red ink falls from the right eye. Anyone wearing the Mask may make Skill checks as if his Awareness were 3 Ranks higher, but any time the wearer does so, there is a 1 in 10 chance the roll automatically fails unless he chooses to gain 1 point of Shadowlands Taint.

TAKUAN (ANCESTOR)

During the Clan War, a great many ronin flocked to the banner of Toturi the Black, the dishonored former Lion Champion. Though a great many of these samurai became heroes of some note, an elite cadre of advisors surrounded Toturi at all times. Legends such as Ginawa and the ronin swordsman Dairyu were never far from Toturi's side, but there was one man who was more than just an aide to the ronin general. Takuan was Toturi's right hand and closest friend during his trials. When Toturi was forced to split his armies into two groups, he could trust Takuan to lead the other army without hesitation.

Takuan saw only one purpose for his life once he entered Toturi's service — unwavering devotion to his new master. Nothing pushed his duty to Toturi's Army from the forefront of his mind, and several ronin remarked that the lieutenant was not a man at all, he was instead the beating heart of the army. Like his master, Takuan's devotion to the ideals of honor and duty caused those under him to follow his commands with unflagging loyalty and resolve. Takuan knew the names and faces of every man who fell under his command, and he never gave any order that he himself was not willing to die following.

When Toturi was named Emperor, the valiant Takuan was given the title of the Emperor's Chancellor. Takuan managed the affairs of the Imperial Capital with the same precision and dedication that he had applied to the battlefield. Though he was not a politician, he was a clever man and knew how to apply the loyalty of those more skilled than he. When Toturi was kidnapped, Takuan was devastated both by the loss of his friend and the decline of order within the Empire. His insistent commands kept Rokugan from sliding headlong into chaos, but he was constantly haunted by what Rokugan became under his watch. When Toturi returned, clearly driven mad by his trials, Takuan felt both his body and soul had become too beleaguered to be of any use to his longtime friend. In hopes of restoring Toturi to the man he once knew, Takuan committed seppuku in protest of his lord's actions. To this day, the ronin commander is cited as an example of bravery, duty, and honor.

ENDLESS VIGILANCE (ANCESTOR: TAKUAN)

Clan: Any

Prerequisites: Must be a member of an Imperial family, the Imperial Legion, or Imperial Magistrates.

Special: This feat may be selected after 1st level.

Benefit: When you spend a Void Point on a Spot or Listen check, you may choose to either have the bonus from the Void Point doubled, or have the skill check count as a free action.

ANCESTOR: TAKUAN (5 POINTS)

You must be a member of an Imperial family, the Imperial Legion, or the Imperial Magistrates to take this ancestor. If you spend a Void Point on a Perception check, you may choose to add your Honor to all dice rolled for the check instead of the normal effects.

SOUL OF THE LION

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

The summoning of Okura no Oni has once again divided the Lion clan in half. There are those who see Kitsu Okura's sacrifice of his soul as the ultimate duty to the Lion clan. Their devotion to the clan knows no limits, and Okura no Oni was the only thing that stopped the rampaging Unicorn army from routing Matsu Ketsui's Lion army. If the Lion army had been defeated there, the Okura supporters say, the Unicorn would feel no remorse over annexing huge tracts of the fertile Lion fields. Though the use of Shadowlands magic is despicable, it was necessary for the survival of the clan. These supporters also despise the Lion Clan Champion Ikoma Tsanuri for abandoning them in their time of crisis.

Then there are those who believe that the summoning of Okura no Oni harkens to recent history within the empire: the fall of the Phoenix clan only several years before during the Second Day of Thunder. The only acceptable stance a Great Clan can have toward corruption is to reject it. The Lion armies have suffered defeats before, but they have always regained their strength and power. These men argue that Ikoma Tsanuri is doing her duty in the Crab lands. They also believe that the Jade Champion, guardian of magical purity in the empire, should not shame himself by practicing maho and cavorting with demons.

To confuse the matter further, many Lion soldiers fell to the Taint in the Battle of the Valley of Storms. Unlike the Crab Clan, the Lion Clan is unaccustomed to dealing with corrupted soldiers that are still loyal to their clan. The Lion leaders have wisely separated the Tainted soldiers into one unit, but this solution is only temporary.

FOCUS

Passing through the Lion lands currently poses significant risk. The Lion samurai are on edge, divided by the Tainted issue and the Okura no Oni issue. Many border patrol guards

are belligerent and only reluctantly let people pass (those from the Crane Clan are provoked at length before they are allowed to go through.). When the party arrives in Shiro Matsu, the rumors going through the base camp are so widespread that even those not in the army can hear them. One rumor says that a group of loyalist soldiers intended to murder all the Tainted samurai in their sleep that night, and another says that those sympathetic to the Tainted intend to kill all those who loudly oppose their presence. The tension in the air is palpable. If something is not done to either stop the rumors or stop the murderers before they strike, the entire city might go up in flames.

STRIKE

Though the Taint has fallen upon their ranks, the Lion samurai are all loyal to the Clan and would generally not do anything rash, such as murdering other Lion samurai against their lord's will. Both rumors are being spread by a Shimizu soldier who has been serving in the Lion army for five years for exactly this moment. He continues to spread rumors until he is found out by the party themselves. Tracing the rumors to their source will require the party to use all their resources available to them. Convincing the Lion samurai that the rumors are false will prove even more difficult. Both of the two Lion factions believe the worst about the other, thinking that their fanatical hatred for the Taint (or their acceptance of the Taint) blinds them to common sense and bushido.

BANDIT ATTACK

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

The bandit-lord known as Rodrigo has been plaguing the lands of the Unicorn for months, preying almost entirely upon Crab and Phoenix caravans. He has become far more than a minor annoyance. The characters are contacted by either the Asako or the Kuni and asked to track down this bandit lord and bring him to justice, no matter what the cost.

This adventure makes sense for experienced characters. The Asako and the Kuni would not entrust a mission of this importance to unknown novices. A non-player character (either a Kuni Witch Hunter or Asako Inquisitor) with an experience level comparable to the characters is sent along with them to observe.

The characters' employers stay tight-lipped about what Rodrigo has done, but they convey the impression that the situation is terrible. Killing or capturing the bandit remains vital, but almost as crucial to the mission is maintaining a low profile.

FOCUS

The characters search the Unicorn lands for the bandit chieftain and his band. The duration and difficulty of the search is left to the GM, but should include encounters with the wrong group of bandits, some misdirection and red herrings. Finding Rodrigo should not be easy.

Eventually the characters locate Rodrigo's base camp, a ramshackle tent-village deep in the mountains of northern Unicorn territory. The size and make-up of the bandit gang is left up to the GM, based on the strength of the characters, but

the fight should be a difficult one. Once the fight begins, the bandits will scatter if they appear to be losing.

Rodrigo is not here; he has just left with a small group of his most trusted men, carrying a black lacquered box. The bandits still at the base camp know this much, but not where he went. The characters' Kuni or Asako companion demands that the entire camp be searched from top to bottom. They will not allow the bandits to escape justice.

STRIKE

The characters track Rodrigo to the top of a remote cliff, high in the mountains. It is a day's travel from the bandit hideout to reach the location. At this secret meeting place, Rodrigo meets his employer, Iuchi Shahai, and gives her what she has been seeking all this time, the Third Mask of Iuchiban. Shahai, in turn, gives Rodrigo an emperor's ransom in gold.

The characters should arrive just as this meeting is taking place. At the GM's discretion, they may get a glimpse of the mask. The characters' companion knows exactly what this mask is. Shahai is a formidable maho-tsukai, but she will not stand and fight. Her mission weighs too heavily. She unleashes deadly magic at the characters to cover her escape. Rodrigo fights to the death, but now that he has been paid, he has little loyalty toward Shahai. He has worked too hard to have his gold taken from him. If the characters foil Shahai's escape, they gain possession of the Third Mask of Iuchiban, a dark and terrible artifact, one that the Bloodspeakers will attempt to seize at all costs.

IMPORTANT NPCs

ISAWA TAERUKO, MASTER OF EARTH

It is no secret that the Phoenix Clan is a mere shadow of what it once was, but one would not know it by looking upon Isawa Taeruko. After the Elemental Council was shattered on the Day of Thunder, she was the first to answer Naka Kuro's call to help rebuild her shattered clan. The cousin of the Phoenix Thunder Isawa Tadaka, Taeruko shares his boundless energy as well as his mastery over the power of Earth. Taeruko leads energetically, idealistically, and with hope for the future. In the rare dark moments when Naka Kuro doubts that the Phoenix will ever rise from the ashes, he need only look upon Taeruko and his hopes are restored.

For her part, Taeruko is proud to serve as Master of Earth, though she wishes that her promotion could have happened under better circumstances. She was close to her cousin, and feels his loss very deeply. She knows that the loss she feels she shares with her entire clan, for rare is the Phoenix who did not lose a loved one in the Clan War. Taeruko keeps her grief closely guarded, as it helps her temper her decisions with compassion. Already she has proven herself a wise and capable leader.

Yet Kuro wonders whether Taeruko's idealism will survive the burdens of leadership. He has noted the fiery temper that seethes beneath Taeruko's cheerful exterior. It is a trait she has kept in check, but he fears that as the Phoenix regain their strength the pressures upon Taeruko will only increase. The Grand Master knows that he will not be there to guide her forever, and only hopes that when the Elemental Council is

fully assembled that they will lend Taeruko the strength she requires to be the legendary leader he believes she could be. If the Master of Earth cannot continue to control her darker impulses, then Kuro fears that the days following the Day of Thunder will not be the prelude to a rebirth of his clan, but a mere epilogue before the Phoenix die out once and for all.

ISAWA TAERUKO, MASTER OF EARTH

Female human Phoenix, Shu 5/ Ten 5: CR 10; Medium humanoid (human); HD 10d6+60; hp 100; Init: +2; Spd 30 ft.; Atk +2 wakizashi +5 melee, 1d6+3 damage; AC 22 (touch 14, flat-footed 20); SQ Class Skill — Spellcraft, Element Focus (Earth), Element Metamagic (Extend Spell), Elemental surge (2/day), Improved Element Focus (+2), Sense Elements, +5 caster level; Honor 2; Glory 2.0; Status 8.0; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +6, Will +13; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 20 (22), Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 10; Maximum Void 2; Ht: 5'1".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Concentration +19, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (elements) +15, Knowledge (maho) +15, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +15, Scrying +10, Spellcraft +15; Ritual Magic, Roar of the Earth (Ancestor: Isawa Tadaka), Skill Focus (Knowledge (elements)), Superior Element Focus (Earth), Void Use.

Dojo: Gisei Toshi.

Spells per day: 6/8/8/7/6/4 base DC 19 + spell level for all Earth spells, 15 for other spells, Elemental Focus — Earth. **Spells Known** (Isawa School) 0-level — *be the mountain, commune with elements, hands of clay, Jurojin's balm, mage hand, mending, purity, resistance, summon, wisdom of the fortunes, virtue*; 1 — *cure light wounds, earth's stagnation, mage armor, protection from taint, Tadaka's gift, whispers of the land*; 2 — *barkskin, endurance, hold person, lesser restoration, murmur of earth*; 3 — *greater magic weapon, magic circle against taint, protection from elements, stone shape*; 4 — *importune kami IV, jade strike, lightning bolt*; 5 — *dispel taint, wall of stone*.

Possessions of Note: +2 amulet of natural armor, +2 bracers of health, +2 cloak of resistance, +2 ring of protection, +2 wakizashi, +3 ashigaru armor, ring of fire resistance (minor).

ISAWA TAERUKO, MASTER OF EARTH

Earth: 5

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Isawa Tensai (Earth) 4

Dojo: Gisei Toshi

Honor: 2.6

Glory: 2.0

Status: 8.0

Advantages: Aligned to the Elements (Earth), Ancestor (Isawa Tadaka), Social Position (Elemental Master)

Disadvantages: Contrary, Idealistic, Proud,

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 2, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 4, History 3, Intimidation 4, Investigation 4, Lore (Elements) 5, Lore (Shadowlands) 5, Meditation 6, Shintao 5, Tanto 3, Theology 4

Spells: As Master of Earth, Taeruko effectively has access to any spells the Phoenix Clan has to offer that she is capable of casting. She also has a number of Earth spells as innate abilities.

HIRUMA YUGURE, DOOMED BERSERKER

Hiruma Yugure is a rarity among the Crab, as his father was a berserker who survived long enough to wed, raise offspring to follow in his footsteps, and retire. Yet while Yugure was always eager to live up to his father's expectations, he was never a particularly skilled warrior. To make matters worse, he was incredibly unlucky as well.

Since the first day he received his post upon the Kaiu Wall, he seemed to have an uncanny tendency for drawing himself and his comrades into impossible situations. Areas of the Wall where he was posted were targets of Shadowlands attacks more frequently than any other. Strange things, such as food supplies going rotten or water barrels springing leaks, frequently occurred in his presence. Yugure began to fear he was cursed, and soon others began to whisper the same.

In time, these rumors reached the ear of Hida O-Ushi. The Crab are a superstitious clan — it is difficult not to be when faced with supernatural terrors on a daily basis — and whether Yugure was truly unlucky or not, it was clear that something must be done. Rather than punish a soldier who had done nothing wrong, she instead granted him an impossible task. He was sent into the Twilight Mountains to investigate the ancient legends of the Shakoki Dogu spirits. O-Ushi reasoned that it was a harmless enough task, and would keep Yugure away from danger.

Yet each day Yugure spends in the mountains, the greater his trepidation grows. He has begun to sense a presence in the land watching him, following him, and waiting. He has seen bloodied footprints on stone paths vanish before his eyes. He has walked through populated villages that were vacant ruins the next day... and then mere ashes the day after that. He has sent many letters to O-Ushi, begging that he be allowed to return to the Wall, but she has discounted his fears as the eagerness of a warrior who has been kept from battle too long.

But each night, the whispers in his dreams grow louder. Yugure knows the Shakoki Dogu, the Ghost of the Twilight Mountains, is real. Somehow, he attracts its attention just as he once attracted the attention of the Shadowlands. Yugure suspects it will only be a matter of time before the spirits come for him.

HIRUMA YUGURE, DOOMED BERSERKER

Male human Crab, Ber 7: CR 7; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 7d12+14; hp 82; Init: +2; Spd 40 ft.; Atk +2 katana +12/+7 melee, 1d10+6 damage; AC 17 (touch 12, flat-footed 15); SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands), damage reduction 1/—, fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, rage 2/day, trap sense +1; Honor 1; Glory 3.0; Status 2.1; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12; Maximum Void 2; Ht: 5'4".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, Climb +13, Jump +13, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +10, Spot +10, Survival +10; Power Attack, Void Use, Way of the Crab, Weapon Focus (katana).

Possessions of Note: +2 ashigaru armor, +2 katana, Shakoki Dogu idol.

HIRUMA YUGURE, DOOMED BERSERKER

Earth: 4

Water: 3

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: Hida Berserker 3

Honor: 1

Glory: 3.0

Status: 2.1

Advantages: Death Trance, Strength of the Earth (2), Way of the Land (Crab lands)

Disadvantages: Dark Fate, Haunted (Shakoki Dogu), Obligation (father), Unluck (6)

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 4, Defense 4, Jiu-jitsu 4, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 4, Lore (Shadowlands) 4, Stealth 4, Tetsubo 4.

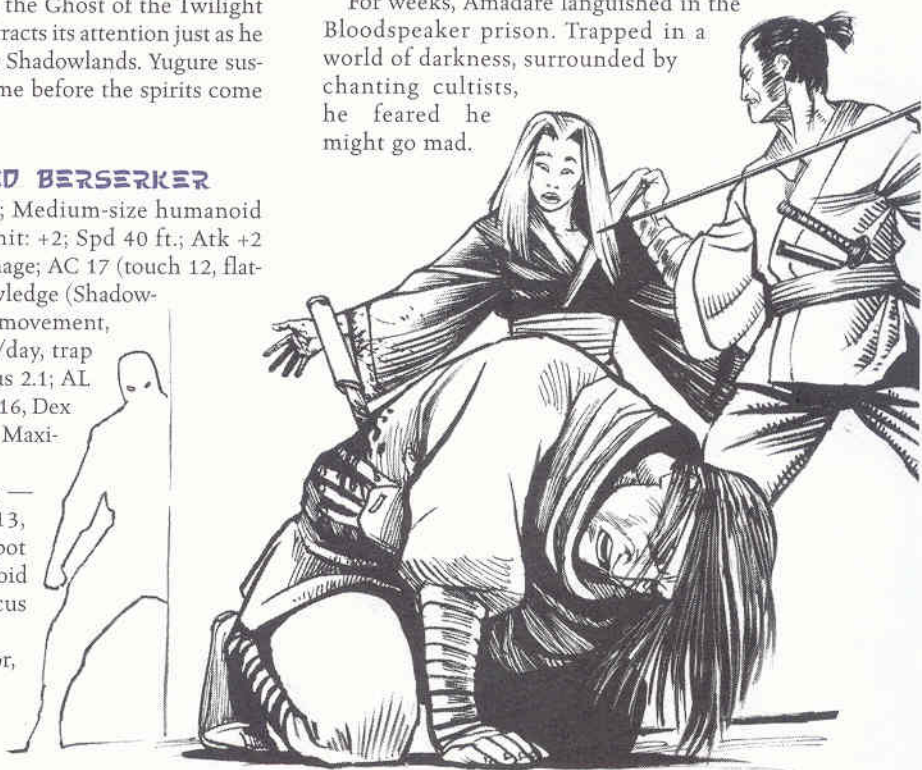
MOTO AMADARE, BLIND SEER

Moto Amadare is a man driven by hatred.

Three years ago, during the height of the Clan War, Moto Amadare was a simple scout in service to the Unicorn. Bloodspeakers ambushed Amadare and his brother on the Plains Above Evil. The two men were dragged into a cavern, where the Bloodspeakers worked foul magic upon them. The Bloodspeakers ritually blinded them and cast excruciatingly painful maho spells upon them. Amadare's brother, Yoshino, did not survive.

Though Amadare could no longer see, he soon realized that he could perceive his Bloodspeaker captives normally. What he had endured had been a Bloodspeaker experiment, to determine if they could create a sentinel who could guard against the predations of Fu Leng's minions and the spawn of the Lying Darkness. Amadare was chained in the depths of the cave until the Bloodspeakers could duplicate the results on a more willing subject.

For weeks, Amadare languished in the Bloodspeaker prison. Trapped in a world of darkness, surrounded by chanting cultists, he feared he might go mad.



Yet his new vision also provided him focus. With no sight to rely upon, darkness held no terror for him. He could always sense the guards approaching, regardless of the iron and stone walls that separated them. He began working his chains against the stones, weakening them, ceasing whenever any of the Bloodspeakers drew into earshot. When at last he was ready, he broke his chains, overpowered a guard, and fled downward into the deep caverns of the earth.

Somehow Amadare survived and returned to the lands of the Moto, but he is a greatly changed man. His family were uncertain how much of his tale they could believe, though it was obvious he had survived something horrible. The crippled warrior was given a comfortable estate in Ryoko Owari and left there in a form of early retirement.

In the last few months he has noted that he can "see" many of the citizens of Ryoko Owari. To him, they appear as faceless abominations, leaking trails of shadow in their wake. He knows that they are driven by some darker power, but he also knows that to act against them may make him appear a madman. If he strikes out against these evils only he can see, he would surely be executed.

Yet as he looks upon the governor's hatamoto, and sees the man's face melt, he can only wonder... is his life worth so much that he would not give it freely to save his clan from a danger that they cannot see?

MOTO AMADARE, BLIND SEER

Male human Unicorn, Ftr 5: CR 5, Medium-size humanoid (human), HD 7d12+14, hp 82, Init: +2, Spd 30 ft., Atk +2 katana +10 melee, 1d10+7 damage, AC 19 (touch 13, flat-footed 16), SQ Class Skill — Knowledge (Shadowlands), Honor 2, Glory 2.0, Status 2.0, AL CN, SV Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +3, Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16, Maximum Void 2, Ht: 5'6".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language — Rokugani, Moto, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Lying Darkness) +4, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +9, Ride +11; Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Void Use, Way of the Unicorn, Weapon Focus (katana), Weapon Specialization (katana).

Possessions of Note: +2 partial armor, +2 katana.

Note: Amadare is permanently considered "blinded" except against targets with the Lying Darkness or Shadowlands subtype, against whom he receives a +20 bonus on all Spot and Listen checks.

MOTO AMADARE, BLIND SEER

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 3

Air: 3

Void: 2

School/Rank: Moto Bushi 2

Honor: 1

Glory: 3.0

Status: 2.1

Advantages: Clear Thinker, Higher Purpose (destroy Bloodspeakers)

Disadvantages: Blind, Driven (destroy Bloodspeakers)

Skills: Athletics 2, Defense 2, Horsemanship 3, Intimidation 3, Kenjutsu 4, Lore (Lying Darkness) 2, Yomanri 2

Note: Amadare is blind, and thus automatically fails any Perception rolls involving sight and suffers a +20 TN penalty to all attack rolls. This penalty does not apply to anyone with

Shadow Points or the Shadowlands Taint. Not only does he see such enemies clearly (regardless of obstructions, which are invisible to him) but he gains two Free Raises on all attacks against such targets.

CULT OF THE DESTROYER ACT III: WEAVING THREADS

SYNOPSIS

This adventure continues the characters' investigations into the strange gaijin cult. Otomo Banu has become convinced that there is some sort of nefarious conspiracy within the Imperial Court, or perhaps a traitor within his own entourage. He does not know the conspiracy's aims, but he believes they will do him harm, and perhaps harm others in the court as well. Like many courtiers with too much time on their hands, he is thrilled at the prospect of a good mystery waiting to be solved. He informs the characters that he is having a party, the secret objective of which is to reveal the traitor's identity. The traitor will be revealed during a game that Banu has devised, and the characters can subsequently apprehend the culprit. Then they can learn more about the conspiracy.

Banu does not realize the traitor is his own trusted assistant, Otomo Hirofumi. Hirofumi rigs the game so that his master appears to be masterminding the strange events of late, possibly for his personal amusement.

The perpetrator of such crimes awaits certain torture and execution, so Banu vehemently and persuasively denies wrongdoing. The characters must decide whom to believe. If they decide to investigate further, they might reveal the traitor and make a disturbing discovery, or they may consign Banu to his fate and put all of Rokugan in danger.

If the GM used another character in place of Otomo Banu in Act 1 of this campaign, Banu should be replaced here with that character. Also, this adventure is written to take place in the fall, but it can easily be adjusted to fit your campaign's timeline. However, it should take place before the Emperor's return, before the Slaughter of the Imperial Court. The location can be changed thanks to the fact that wealthy courtiers often keep multiple residences.

SCENE ONE: LET'S HAVE A PARTY!

Otomo Banu invites the characters to his home in Otosan Uchi by way of sealed letters. The letters are sealed not only with the Otomo family mon (Heraldry roll, TN 10/Knowledge (nobility & royalty), DC 10), but also his own personal seal (Heraldry roll, TN 20/Knowledge (nobility & royalty), DC 20). The letter is an invitation to a party, written in exquisite calligraphy on heavy, expensive linen paper. The party will be held at Otomo Banu's residence on the evening of the autumnal equinox a few days hence, an auspicious and important day in the Rokugani calendar. Inside the invitation is a less elaborate slip of rice paper asking the characters to come to the house at midday, several hours early.

When the characters arrive at Banu's residence, they are

met by Banu's assistant Otomo Hirofumi. He sees them through the immaculately kept house, past expensive works of sculpture and calligraphic art into the seclusion of the garden, where Banu awaits them.

The noonday sun warms the air, but the coolness of the shadows feel still crisp under the trees of the garden. Water lilies float on a mirror-still pond filled with blunt golden carp swimming languidly under the surface. Banu sits on a stone bench in a clearing barely large enough for all of you. He motions you toward the other stone benches, "Please, sit. It has been some time... too long with a festering danger lurking in the shadows."

Banu stands flanked by two new bodyguards who stand silently behind him. Hirofumi leaves them in private, seeing no need to spy. He already knows his master's plans, and has made plans of his own.

Banu continues, "I'm sure you're wondering why I have invited you to this party, and why I asked you to come early. Well, we have a mystery, don't we, and one that must be solved for the good of the Empire. Courtiers love riddles, and if there is anything that we love more than riddles, it's a party. So I have decided to solve our riddle with a party."

Banu glances at you, gauging your reactions. "I believe there is only one explanation for recent events. I have seen some disturbing movements of late, and I believe some darker conspiracy lurks afoot, someone wishing to take advantage of our Emperor's absence. I believe they have help from within the Imperial Court. Someone in the court itself has been turned against us." Then he smiles smugly. "But I have devised a game wherewith we might unmask the traitor. I have asked you here to observe, and to apprehend the traitor when the time comes. No one in the party will know our true purpose until that moment. But tread lightly. Some of the most august personages in all the Empire will be in attendance tonight. Words can cut more deeply than steel. A sword blow can kill one man, but a misspoken word can kill an entire family."

It is left to the GM to decide who attends the party, but Otomo Banu is as a long-serving personage in the Court, and an invitation to his house is a great honor. Some of the most powerful and influential courtiers will attend. The characters would be wise to be on their best behavior, but ready to act at a moment's notice. The GM should have one famous Mantis in attendance, a courtier if possible, or someone close to the court.

If the characters ask how they will know when Banu has determined the identity of the traitor, he replies, "You will know."

"There is one more thing," Banu says. "There is someone I would like you to watch closely tonight. The Mantis. It is an open secret that the Mantis clan has had dealings with the gaijin for years, and your own investigation of my former yojimbo's deaths seems to indicate that gaijin may be involved. Our culprit is most likely one of them."

Observing Banu (Awareness roll, TN 20/Sense Motive, DC 20) reveals that he has no particular grudge against the Mantis in question, other than a general distaste for the clan itself. He truly believes a Mantis is the most likely culprit.

SCENE TWO: FLUSHING THE PREY

That evening, the courtiers arrive at the appointed time. Of course, everyone is required to leave his katana (or other weapons) in the care of Banu's servants. This applies to the characters as well. Wakizashi are permitted. Weapons will be returned when the guests depart.

The house is filled with bodyguards, attendants, and court finery. Shimmering silk and glittering regalia mask the underlying tension among the guests. Even the most joyous party is never simply that.

When all the guests have arrived, servants appear with trays of sake, shochu, and tea. When everyone has a drink in his hand, Banu begins the party with a toast to the health of his honored guests. The guests toast their host with a hearty, "Kanpai!" Then begins a seemingly endless succession of sweets and tasty tidbits, bottomless jars of sake, and steaming teapots. The doors of Banu's house stand open to reveal his splendid garden bathed in starlight and the soft glow of the lamps spilling from the house.

Despite the gaiety of the atmosphere, there is work being done here: deals struck, arrangements made, alliances formed, intrigues launched. The characters may wish to take part in this. Most characters have few chances like this to interact with the power-brokers of the Imperial Court, so they might want to take advantage of it. The GM should be prepared for this.

About an hour after the party begins, as the guests feel the effects of the sake, Banu gets into the true purpose of this party.

"Honored and distinguished guests, may I have your attention? I have devised a special treat for your enjoyment this fine evening. Right now, my servants are distributing packages to all of you. Inside each one of these packages you will find a small packet of incense. There are thirteen different fragrances of incense, some of which are quite popular. You will each be given a shoji, behind which to seclude yourself for a few moments to memorize the scent of your packet of incense. After that, each of you will take turns behind this shoji screen," he gestures to a beautifully painted shoji on one side of the room, opposite the doors to the garden, "to identify the numbered urn with contains the same incense as yours. Success means that you get to play another round, until only one remains. Rest assured, the winner will receive a handsome prize! Everyone gets to play, even myself!"

At that moment, one of the female courtiers [GMs choice] chimes in, "Oh, I love this game! We played this at Winter Court and it was so enjoyable!"

Servants begin to carry out shoji screens, which are erected around the room for the guests to privately light their incense in small clay burners and try to remember the smell.

The difficulty in this game lies in the olfactory senses becoming overpowered by too many pungent fragrances in quick succession, and participants are only given about one minute to smell their sample. Characters are expected to participate along with everyone else.

Banu has commissioned a special magical incense impregnated with Air spirits who hide in the smoke and search the thoughts of the participants. This special magical incense awaits behind the test screen. Once the Air spirits find the person they seek, the smoke from incense solidifies and ensnares the culprit, holding him fast. At least, that is what Banu *thinks* will happen.

When it becomes Banu's turn, the magical incense attacks him immediately. Crying out in shock and dismay, Banu finds himself caught in his own trap. As the characters run behind the shoji screen, read the following:

Tendrils of ethereal gray smoke hover in the air, reaching from within an elaborately cast golden burner. All of the burners are beautifully made, from pottery to porcelain to polished wood, but only one is gold. The writhing tendrils of dark gray smoke are wrapped like ropes around Banu's hands, ankles, and throat.

"But it's not me!" he cries, his voice choked by the smoky tentacle.

SCENE THREE: SMOKE AND LIES

The guests erupt into an uproar, and bodyguards leap out of the woodwork to protect their masters. Banu's plan has backfired and could easily degenerate into a chaotic debacle of bloodshed, terror, and fleeing courtiers, depending on who is present. Since the only people who knew the purpose of the game are Banu, Hirofumi, and the characters, they might try to make up any story they can to buy time to get to the bottom of things.

The smoky tentacles are equivalent to a *grasping hand* spell cast at 10th level, but they do not attempt to do damage. They only hold the victim immobile.

The smoky tentacles are Strength 5 and Agility 3 and last for 10 turns. They hold the victim immobile and do not attempt to do damage.

If a fight ensues, Hirofumi maintains his cover and protects his master. If cooler heads prevail, the characters have a chance to interrogate Otomo Banu. Hirofumi knows that if the characters believe Banu, he figures as the only other suspect, because it was Hirofumi who made the arrangements with the shugenja who created the incense. Hirofumi gave the shugenja false instructions, instructions that would induce the incense to attack Banu specifically.

The shugenja who created the special incense is a respected Crane artisan and had no idea that she was given false instructions, but she can confirm that Hirofumi was the facilitator of her agreement with Banu to make the incense.

If the characters interrogate Banu, he protests ardently, terrified of being tortured and executed. It is up to them to find the truth.

"I'm not the one!" Banu repeats over and over, his voice filled with desperation. "This party was my idea! Why would I go to all this trouble to create a trap for myself? I don't know what could have gone so wrong!"

Banu will not suspect Hirofumi of wrongdoing. He steadfastly believes Hirofumi is his loyal servant and protégé, having known him since he was a boy. Hirofumi stays close to Banu through any interrogations or deliberations, and he will very politely not take 'no' for an answer.

Hirofumi's purpose is twofold: if Banu meets with disgrace, then Hirofumi stands to assume many of his duties, increasing his personal power and that of the entire cult. If his gambit is unsuccessful, then he will fulfill his vow and attempt to kill Banu, striking another blow against the Empire in the Destroyer's name.

If the characters believe Banu's protests and begin to see Hirofumi as the culprit, Hirofumi looses a bloodcurdling cry in a strange language, a malediction of the Cult of the Destroyer, and attacks Otomo Banu. "The Destroyer's touch spares no one!" he screams maniacally. He beats Banu to death. If he somehow succeeds, he attempts to flee.

Hirofumi has only one bit of physical evidence connecting him to the cult, a letter that came for him this very afternoon. He is still carrying it on his person. It is written in encrypted Ivory Kingdoms script. Anyone wishing to read this letter must not only understand the Ivory Kingdoms language, but break the code as well. (Speak Language (Ivory Kingdoms) and Decipher Script, DC 30)/Ivory Kingdoms Language TN 25 and Cipher TN 30). If the characters manage to decipher the letter:

"All is in place for the strike. After the next full moon, the Seppun shall die. Their line will be extinguished to prove our lord's power. The Destroyer shall have no other gods or men before him!"
(The letter is signed with the same strange gaijin symbol as seen in Part 1.)

If the characters save Banu's life, they will have an important courtier in their debt, and another piece of disturbing information. What exactly does Hirofumi's letter mean?

CHAPTER FOUR:

AMBITION'S DEBT

Today was surely a most glorious day in Shinjo Shono's life, one he would remember until such time as he lay dying on his bed of infirmity and old age. The Kami Shinjo had returned to her people, as she had sworn she would so long ago. All true Unicorn Clan samurai could rejoice.

The morning began ominously, with reports of a Unicorn army on the move near the border between Shinjo provinces and the mountains that separated them from the Burning Sands. Shono was aware that his father, the Unicorn Champion Shinjo Yokatsu, had placed several large forces on maneuvers in the area, but reports came in indicating erratic movements and, far more importantly, the presence of a large contingent of Scorpion in the area. Concerned that the deceitful Clan of Secrets had returned from their exile and were staging an attack against their enemies in the Unicorn, Yokatsu ordered Shono to take several divisions and investigate.

What he discovered was beyond anything he could imagine. Without question a huge Scorpion army rode alongside the Unicorn army. Not only that, but there were gaijin among the Scorpion officers, some bearing the symbols of nations Shono had never seen in all his readings. Most importantly, however, a woman rode at the army's head, a woman with a presence and majesty unlike anything Shono had ever experienced. He confronted her, and she informed him that she was the Kami Shinjo, returned at last. One look into her eyes and Shono knew she spoke the truth. He could no more refute it than he could take to the sky in flight. Her blood ran true. She was Shinjo.

And so he was honored to serve as her herald, escorting her back to the resplendent halls of the castle that bore her name. His heart beat full of excitement at the notion of introducing Shinjo to his father. He stepped into the court chamber, smiling broadly at the

assembled Shinjo dignitaries and officers. Some, he noticed, looked slightly uncomfortable. But then anxiety was to be expected when confronted with one's ancestors, he supposed. "My friends, honored guests," he said with a bow, "it is my joy to present to you my venerated ancestor, the Lady Shinjo, recently freed from her prison in the Burning Sands and returned to us."

There were gasps as Shinjo strode into the room, then a rustling of clothing as dozens knelt before their god made flesh. "Rise," she said simply, no trace of emotion in her voice. She walked across the room, carefully examining each occupant in turn, as if searching for something. Shono's smile faded somewhat at the strange behavior, then disappeared entirely as Shinjo drew her blade and cut one man from shoulder to hip. "Traitor!" she hissed. "Kolai filth!" She turned and cut another man down. The room dissolved in panic.

Shono's face fell. "Imposter!" he snarled, reaching for his blade. The true Shinjo would not do such a thing! A hand grabbed his wrist, preventing him from drawing his blade. He whirled about in a rage only to be confronted by the depthless eyes of his sister Haruko.

"Do nothing," she whispered. "Draw your blade and she will kill you in her fury."

"She cannot be Shinjo!" Shono swore.

"She can be no one else," Haruko returned. "Look at her!"

Shono looked. Her speed was inhuman, moving across the room with such clarity that she almost left an image of herself in her wake. Even more evident was her technique. She wielded a katana in the same manner as Shono, but her technique bore no flaws. When training his sensei told Shono to imagine the most perfect execution of his kata, and let such vision guide his movements. He never achieved perfection of the hand, and never witnessed firsthand the beauty of a perfect stroke that he had envisioned on that day. Until now.

Six men lay dead on the floor, their blood staining the immaculate marble floors. Though small in stature, Shinjo towered over the entire chamber in her wrath. "These men dared sully my name with their treachery," she said, her voice thick with hatred. "They and their kind have infiltrated my family like a disease, like scurrying insects hiding beneath a stone." She glared at everyone in turn. "I know their names. I know their hearts. They will die, as will any who fail to rededicate themselves in my name. The Shinjo failed, and I am removing control of the Unicorn Clan from this family. None among you are worthy." Here she turned and fixed Shono with a stare. "Though some show promise." She turned back to the crowd. "I have the names of the traitors. Tell your subordinates that none can hide from me. They can run if they wish, but there will be no escape." And with that, she left.

Shono's trembling hand finally moved away from his blade. "Where is Father?" he asked. "He will know what to do."

Haruko's face fell. "He left shortly after you did. He took provisions. I... I do not think he planned to return."

"What?" Shono demanded. "That's ridiculous. Why would he..." His voice trailed off. Shinjo Yokatsu would never leave unless he already knew that Shinjo would return, and that she was wrathful. And there would be no reason to fear that unless...

"No," Shono whispered. "Not Father."

AMBITION'S DEBT — TIMELINE

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE DOG (LATE FALL)

SHINJO'S HUNT BEGINS

Shinjo returns to Rokugan at the head of a vast Scorpion army with her personal attendants quickly reentering the Unicorn provinces. A grand Unicorn army greets them, the general of which immediately kneels before Shinjo. Shinjo immediately senses that the man is a traitor, and executes him on the spot. His second in command, Otaku Tetsuko, witnesses the event and then feels Shinjo's furious gaze fall upon her. Overcome with remorse, Tetsuko immediately confesses that she and the general were both members of the Kolat, and describes the conspiracy, its goals, and plans to the fullest extent she understands them. Shinjo listens to her testimony and gathers a list of all her descendants and followers who have betrayed her by siding with the heretics, then permits Tetsuko to commit seppuku to cleanse the stain she has brought upon it. With list in hand, Shinjo descends upon the Unicorn lands with terrible vengeance. The Unicorn Champion Shinjo Yokatsu flees, taking refuge in the Hidden Temple of the Kolat.

JADE HAND RECOVERED

When the Qamar hears that the Crab Clan Champion perished after his people's abandonment of Hiruma Castle, he commands the Shashakar, the greatest shugenja of his race, to

do what he can to correct their unforgivable mistake. Using ancient divinations, Shashakar determines the location of the lost Jade Hand, now fallen in the depths of the Black Finger River. He dispatches the Oseuth, a bold and clever young Naga, to recover the artifact. After a long and difficult quest, Oseuth recovers the Jade Hand and returns it to Shashakar. He also returns with an unexpected prize — the mutilated corpse of Hida Yakamo.

KITSUKI KAAGI'S SEPPUKU

Since his rescue Kitsuki Kaagi's knowledge of the Lying Darkness has served the Dragon Clan well. Yet with each day he remains free, the whispers of the Darkness become stronger in his ears. With savage irony he realizes that during his imprisonment it was easy enough to resist the darkness; defying his corrupted brother gave him the strength he needed. Now that he is free, however, its voice seduces him more and more. Rather than allow himself to become an enemy of the Empire, Kitsuki Kaagi commits seppuku to deny the Darkness his service.

WAR IN THE SHADOWLANDS

The Lying Darkness' minions reach Oblivion's Gate in the lost city of Volturnum. This gateway unifies all the Spirit Realms, including Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors. With more heroes in the Empire realizing the threat the Darkness poses, it must act more swiftly than originally planned.

Making contact with Kuni Yori, Goju Adorai reveals the part the Darkness played in delaying Hida O-Ushi's arrival at Shiro Hiruma. In return for Yori's assistance in defending the gate while the Darkness infests Yomi, he offers to help the mad tsukai rid himself of Kyoso no Oni.

Yori (correctly) suspects that the Darkness' true motives in delaying the Crab were selfish, but agrees to Adorai's terms. With the aid of Adorai's Goju, Moto Tsume rides out to hunt down the rogue Oni Lord, Kyoso.

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE BOAR (EARLY WINTER)

HITOMI REALIZES THE TRUTH

Finally having gained some measure of control over the dark influences that have driven her to madness over the past year, Hitomi recognizes the enormity of what she has set into motion. She invites the exiled Togashi to return to the High House of Light and many of the monks who swore fealty to Hoshi's name accompany them.

Soon after, she receives a vision of the creation, the time when Lady Sun and Lord Moon walked the mortal realm and gave names to all things. She witnesses the scrap of primordial nothing that avoids receiving a name. She watches as this entity becomes the Lying Darkness and twists the mind of Onnotangu. She realizes that the Darkness cannot be stopped so long as Lord Moon continues to offer it support and favor.

To save the Empire, Hitomi must do the impossible — she must kill a god.

KUNI YORI APPEARS TO SHAHAI

The ruined form of Kuni Yori appears in the Unicorn provinces, drawn there by the siren call of Iuchi Shahai's corrupt power. Yori gives her a strange gaijin artifact called the Burning Words, a written account of a bargain between Fu Leng and ancient gaijin gods called the Shi-Tien Yen-Wang. The prophecy speaks of a time when the Dark Moto (whom the prophecy refers to as the True Moto) will strike down their rogue brethren (those who serve the Unicorn). In order for the prophecy to come about, the book must be carried into battle against the rogue Moto by a "true hero of the Ki-Rin." Shahai agrees, eager for the brand of power Yori offers.

Shortly after Yori departs the Oni Lord, Kyoso, begins to invisibly shadow Shahai, waiting to see what develops next.

ANCESTRAL MANIFESTATIONS

The appearance of ancestral spirits in the mortal world becomes more frequent as the Darkness weakens the boundaries between the spirit realms and the realm of mortals. In the Scorpion lands, a statue devoted to the memory of Bayushi Urei rises from the stone pedestal where it has stood for over a century and moves to take its place as a guard of the newly re-occupied Kyuden Bayushi. While some are fearful of this strange being, many celebrate it as proof that the Celestial Heavens have endorsed their return and exonerated them.

Near the same time, in the Crab lands, a wayward Hiruma patrol is saved from a massive oni by a lone samurai that the surviving scouts swear bore a phenomenal resemblance to depictions of the first Hiruma. In Crane lands, a trio of young courtiers is found nearly hysterical in Kyuden Doji after encountering the exact likeness of Doji Hoturi in the palace gardens. Other similar incidents are reported throughout the Empire, though few recognize it as a trend rather than just a few isolated incidents.

BETRAYAL OF MATSU HIROU

Matsu Hiroru and Ginawa infiltrate the Imperial City, hoping to investigate rumors of the Emperor's madness. Strangely, the two find it extraordinarily easy to sneak into the palace. Toturi awaits them alone in his throne

room. Upon noticing them, he fluctuates wildly between thinly veiled threats and pleas for help. All the while, the shadows seem to be watching. Unable to help, they quickly withdraw from his presence.

Desperate for more information, Hiroru arranges to meet with his lover, Doji Shizue, a high ranking courtier who survived the slaughter of the Imperial Court. When they arrive in a secluded barn to meet with Shizue, they also find Hiroru's former master, the Kolat Master, Kage, waiting for them. At his spoken command, Shizue draws a knife and stabs Hiroru in the back. Hiroru falls unconscious from the knife's poison.

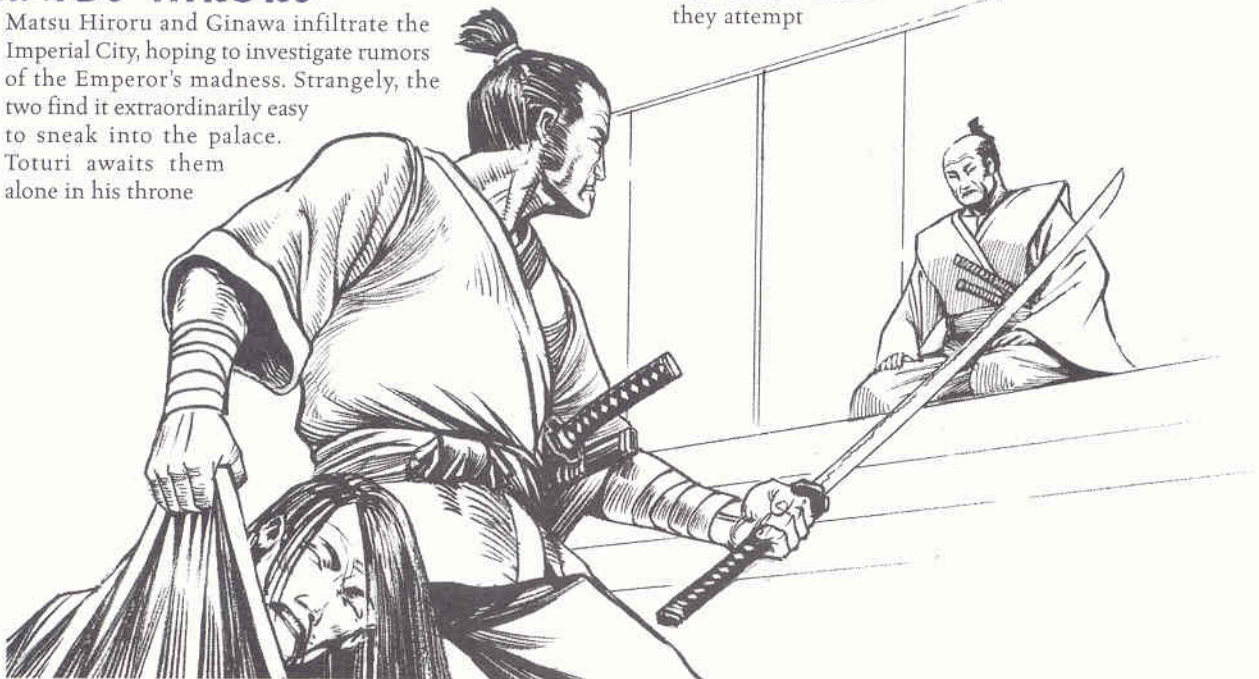
Kage then attempts to convince Ginawa to leave, that he has unfinished business with Hiroru. Ginawa refuses, advancing on the Kolat Master. Kage's lieutenant attempts to block Ginawa's path but Ginawa cuts the man down. Kage and Shizue vanish into the shadows just as the Imperial Guard arrives. Seeing the dead man, Toku has no choice but to take his friend Ginawa into custody.

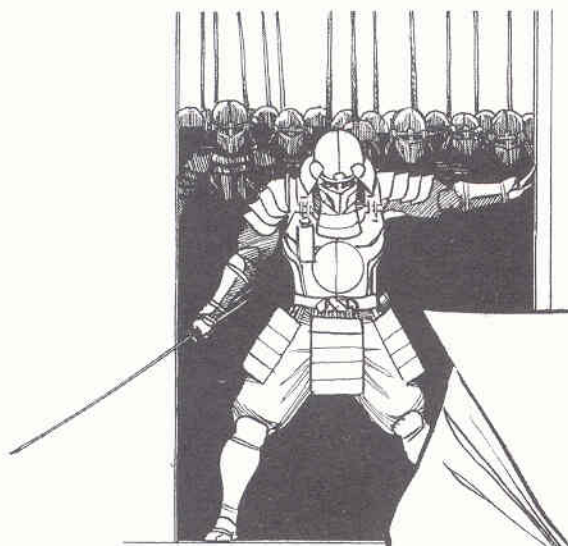
THE CULT OF THE MOON

The ancient cultist Bunrakuken, devotee of Lord Moon, emerges from his blasphemous temple deep in the Spine of the World Mountains along with many of his most dangerous students. Under the command of Bunrakuken's student, Roshungi, they scatter throughout the Empire to oppose the Dragon Clan's efforts to procure relics that bear Onnotangu's power. Ultimately, the heretical monks are no match for the power of the kikage zumi who hunt the artifacts, but Roshungi's interference complicates their search.

CHAOS IN THE SHINOMEN MORI

Unknown to the Scorpion Clan, a small number of Ashalan assassins follow them back to Rokugan, intent on locating and eliminating their race's eternal enemies: the Naga. Intent as they are upon the Darkness and its machinations, the Naga are unprepared for the sudden attack made by the immortal sorcerers. The Ashalan penetrate the Naga's defenses and gain entry into one of their nurseries, where they attempt





to enact a mystical ritual designed to destroy the Naga once and for all. The ritual is interrupted before completion, muting its effects. The ritual is intended to weaken the Naga, to remove their virtual immortality and make them little more than human. Instead, it merely accelerates the slow decay of the Naga race back into their eternal slumber. The jakla of the Cobra bloodline become concerned that their race has little time left.

THE UNICORN MARCH ON OTOSAN UCHI

Having completed the purge of her family to her satisfaction, the Kami Shinjo prepares to march on Otosan Uchi and destroy the corrupted Emperor Toturi. Moto Gaheris, newly named champion of the Unicorn, rides beside her along with the Moto White Guard and the Otaku Battle Maidens. Shinjo Shono, son of the disgraced Shinjo Yokatsu, vows to serve the Kami loyally and atone for the crimes his family has committed. Although Gaheris advises killing him, Shinjo accepts his vow and leaves the Unicorn lands under his care while the armies march toward Otosan Uchi.

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE RAT (MID-WINTER)

THE GREAT SEA SPIDER IS UNLEASHED

Using an ancient biwa nemuranai long ago crafted by Asahina minions of the Darkness, Goju Adorai releases the Great Sea Spider from its ocean prison. For once, however, the spider does not rampage across Rokugan, but listens intently to Adorai's commands and waits for its moment to strike.

GINAWA ESCAPES

Imprisoned for weeks in the Imperial Palace, Ginawa makes his escape. He takes Hiroru with him, though the ninja has not recovered from his wounds and cannot be moved far. Ginawa takes refuge in an abandoned sake house at the outskirts of Otosan Uchi and plans while his friend recovers.



WAR IN THE HEAVENS

As the Unicorn armies face off against the Emperor's forces in Otosan Uchi, the Great Sea Spider weaves a web of shadow over the city. Empowered by the chaos and darkness, Lord Moon manifests a mortal avatar in the city and prepares to strike down all those who would challenge the mad Emperor. Minions of the Darkness infest the city, slaughtering all those who do not flee swiftly enough.

Meanwhile, Hitomi, equipped with an assortment of nemuranai infused with Lord Moon's power and guided by Togashi's wisdom, ascends the Dragon Road to the Celestial Heavens and challenges Onnotangu to a duel. Disgusted with the presumptuousness of mortals and eager to reclaim his lost hand, Onnotangu accepts, battling Hitomi even as his avatar engages Shinjo's forces in Otosan Uchi.

The monk Takao, spiritual leader of the Brotherhood since Tetsuya's death and longtime resident of the city, engages the avatar to save the lives of countless innocents. Incredibly, Takao not only survives but defeats the avatar in a single round of combat.

As the Moon's avatar falls, Onnotangu is greatly weakened. This provides Hitomi with the opportunity she requires, and she quickly takes Lord Moon's head.

THE EMPEROR DISAPPEARS

In the moments following Lord Moon's death at Hitomi's hands, Ginawa confronts the Emperor. He finds he cannot bring himself to kill Toturi, but instead smuggles the Emperor to the outskirts of the city where he has hidden Hiroru. As he contemplates the Emperor's fate, Oracle of Void Isawa Kaede reappears. In her presence, the madness that has consumed Toturi fades. Kaede heals Hiroru's wounds and promises Ginawa that she will do what she can to save the Emperor's soul. The Oracle and Emperor vanish, spirited to a secluded castle in Phoenix lands by Kaede's magic.

The tormented Emperor recalls that, long ago, he was betrothed to Kaede before circumstances drove them apart. He begs her to marry him so that there might be an Empress who is immune to the Shadow's control, who might rule the Emperor justly after he succumbs to madness. Kaede agrees, and the two are wed in the forests of the Phoenix, but Kaede does not yet give up hope that Toturi can be redeemed.

YORITOMO REFUSES THE THRONE

Following Toturi's disappearance, the Kami Shinjo demands that someone occupy the Jade Throne. She realizes she has been gone from the Empire too long to lead effectively and the only Unicorn daimyo she truly trusts, Moto Gaheris, is likewise a stranger to these lands. She instead seeks out the Son of Storms, whose lineage and reputation have greatly impressed the Kami. Surprisingly, Yoritomo denies Shinjo's offer of the Jade Throne, claiming that he cannot accept a prize he has not earned.

THE NATURAL ORDER IS DISRUPTED

The death of Onnotangu causes enormous physical and metaphysical upheaval throughout Rokugan and the Spirit Realms. Many monks and shugenja find that their prayers go unanswered as the divine denizens of Tengoku struggle to adjust to the shifting power unleashed with Onnotangu's death. The night sky stands empty save for a handful of distant stars, and the tides on Rokugan's shore lose all sense of regularity, shifting high and low without rhyme or reason.

AMATERASU FLEES THE HEAVENS

Distraught over the death of her estranged husband Onnotangu and furious at the betrayal of the Celestial Order that brought about his death, Lady Amaterasu flees the Celestial Heavens, denying her light to Rokugan. As she departs, she dispatches Shinjo to collect the ancestral swords of each Great Clan and casts them into the stars, where mortal hands will never reach them.

With Amaterasu's light gone from the Empire, the Lying Darkness's power is amplified tenfold, and its influence quickly spreads.

THE TWENTY-SEVEN DAYS OF DARKNESS

With Amaterasu gone from the Heavens, Rokugan is plunged into near total darkness. Panic breaks out across the Empire, with peasants and samurai alike believing the world has come to an end and that Jigoku is swallowing the world. During the chaos, Hitomi embarks on a quest to find her destiny, scouring the Empire in a mere twenty-seven days thanks to the divine powers infused within her from her defeat of Onnotangu. At the end of her quest, she arrives at the Shrine of Three Sisters in the Dragon mountains. The ancient women aid her in recognizing her destiny.

Knowing what she must do, Hitomi prepares to commit seppuku. Even as she does so, however, an oni appears, sent from Jigoku by the Darkness to destroy her and cast the world in an eternal shroud of darkness. The demon destroys a small force of Phoenix and Mantis warriors, separated from their respective forces during the conflict in the neighboring Phoenix lands. A Phoenix warrior, Shiba Odoshi, finds himself in Toshigoku after he is slain in the conflict, but returns to his body through sheer force of will. He attacks and kills the oni, then serves as Hitomi's second as she completes the seppuku ceremony. She ascends and becomes the new Lady Moon, while Odoshi accompanies her into the heavens and takes his place in her court as the Evening Star.

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE OX (MID-WINTER)

HIDA YAKAMO RESTORED

The Shashakar notes the recent imbalance in the Celestial Order, and takes advantage of it to attempt to redeem the Naga's betrayal of the Crab. Using an ancient pearl with the power to force the reincarnation of a Naga soul, the Shashakar reaches through the Spirit Realms and draws Hida Yakamo's soul back to his body. His tortured corpse made whole, purified, and rejoined with the Jade Hand by Naga magic, Yakamo awakens to the land of the living once more. He returns as he was in life, but now his eyes shine green with the wisdom of the Akasha. What has returned is not merely Yakamo but also the reincarnation of the Qatol, revered leader of all Naga.

Immediately after Yakamo's return, the aged Shashakar succumbs to the power of his magic and perishes. His power and wisdom pass on to his student, the Shasyahkar.

THE DARKNESS IN THE SHADOWLANDS

As the power of the Darkness unfolds, Adorai strengthens his ties with the Shadowlands. He promises Kuni Yori that the time of their victory against the Empire is nigh. Undead forces now march openly with minions of the Lying Darkness throughout the Shadowlands. Yori does not truly trust Adorai, but reasons that he stands to gain more as an ally than as an enemy until the opportunity arises for betrayal.

THE PROPHECY BEGINS

Throughout Lady Shinjo's purge of the traitorous elements within the Unicorn Clan, the Unicorn Thunder Otaku Kamoko remains apart, divided between her loyalty to Shinjo and her distaste for the slaughter of her kinsmen. Kamoko is left behind when Shinjo takes the Unicorn armies to Otosan Uchi, and her obvious disappointment draws the attention of Iuchi Shahai. Shahai attempts to seduce Kamoko with promises of power and the Burning Words, but Kamoko refuses. However, the voice of Kyoso no Oni whispers in her mind, promising to protect her from the Taint so that she can lead the Dark Moto into an ambush. In return, the oni wishes to hide within Kamoko's soul just long enough to approach her hated enemy Moto Tsume undetected and destroy him. Kamoko, overcome by her increasing feelings of disillusionment, agrees in hopes that she might yet do some good by destroying the Dark Moto.

Kamoko accepts the Burning Words from Shahai, then strikes the shugenja down for her treachery and leaves her for dead, riding south toward the Shadowlands without a word to any other of her kinsmen. She soon finds the armies of the Dark Moto. Though Tsume is hesitant to trust the Thunder, he cannot deny her commands, for she carries the Burning Words. He must honor the pact that has been made.

Shahai, not at all surprised by Kamoko's violent attack, rises fully healed hours after Kamoko's departure via a dark ritual performed long before meeting with the Unicorn Thunder.

WHAT'S NEW

THE LEGION OF TWO THOUSAND

The Legion of Two Thousand is perhaps the most unique military unit in existence in Rokugan. It is similar in many respects to the Imperial Legions, although it is noticeably smaller than those units and it holds no place within that organization's hierarchy, and thus is not accountable to any among their number. Indeed, the Legion answers only to the Emperor, the Emerald Champion, and a handful of the highest ranking officers within the Emperor's chosen military advisors. This unique situation results from the circumstances surrounding the Legion's creation, an event that has its origin in the Clan War's aftermath.

During the Clan War's peak, the Great Clans were so embroiled within their own conflicts that they took little notice that the Shadowlands Horde was gradually infiltrating and ravaging the Empire. It was only when Fu Leng's true plans became evident that the clans put aside their squabbles and did what was necessary to return order. Before that took place, there were precious few forces in Rokugan that could delay the Horde's advance. The most prominent of those was of course the ronin army under the command of Toturi, the former Lion Champion who became Emperor after Fu Leng's defeat. Upon taking his place on the throne, Toturi carefully assessed how it came to be that Fu Leng's plan had so nearly succeeded.

Reflecting upon the Clan War, it was evident to Toturi that in the absence of a clear authority, the Great Clans could not be trusted to look beyond their personal pursuits and act in the Empire's best interests. Furthermore, the lack of said authority would also prevent the Imperial Legions from acting with the certainty and uniformity of purpose necessary to maintain order. What was needed, in Toturi's assessment, was a highly trained, capable military unit that could be trusted to act in the best interests of Rokugan's people. This unit would need to be small so that it could move quickly, and free of any clan-specific agenda. Combined with the fact that Toturi had many ronin followers and recognized the difficulty working alongside large numbers of clan samurai, his path became clear.

Toturi personally approved every initial member of the Legion of Two Thousand. The majority were ronin who had served him during the Clan War, although there were also representatives from each Great Clan and a considerable number of representatives from various minor clans. For the Legion's commander, Toturi selected a samurai with experience and ability, and one that Toturi believed would flourish when given his own command despite previous difficulties. The Legion of Two Thousand's first commander was Kitsu Motso, who later became one of the Lion Clan's greatest generals based on the experience gained during his command.

Since its inception, the Legion of Two Thousand has tirelessly patrolled the Empire, intervening whenever stability is threatened. In this way, they have maintained the tradition of Toturi's armies during the Clan War. Members of the Legion were among the first in Rokugan to battle the Lying Darkness, and it was the Legion that remained behind to help defend the Kaiu Wall when the Crab deployed forces along with other clans to reach the city of Volturum. The Legion held the line against the invading Yobanjin tribes until Toturi Tsudao and the Imperial Legions could arrive to turn the tide.

Two thousand samurai make up the Legion, as the name indicates. When a Legion loses a soldier or one leaves its service, the Imperial Capital requisitions another one, although they far more frequently come from Great Clans now that the number of ronin in the Empire has returned to a normal level. Soldiers select leaders based on ability and seniority and the Emperor must approve them (this is largely ceremonial, as the Emperor is rarely bothered unless it is to approve the new Legion Commander). The Legion is frequently broken up into smaller groups and deployed throughout the Empire to maintain a vigil over any of a number of threats or conflicts.

THE LEGION OF TWO THOUSAND (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Hit die: d10

Requirements: In order to qualify for membership in the Legion of Two Thousand, a character must meet the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +8 or higher.

Skills: Battle (10 ranks), Knowledge (Law) (5 ranks).

Feats: Any two Technique feats.

Other: Honor of 3 or greater.

Special: Ronin characters may choose to ignore any single skill or feat requirement for entry into this prestige class. They must meet all others. Any character whose Honor falls below 3 may not advance in this class until their Honor returns to 3 or higher.

Class Skills: The legionnaire's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are: Battle (Wis), Intimidation (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Search (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

Skill points per level: 2 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES:

Never Stand Alone: When fighting alongside other members of the Legion (any characters that have levels in this prestige class), the legionnaire may add a +1 morale bonus to all saves and attack rolls made while the other legionnaires are within 30 ft. This bonus increases to +2 at 3rd level and to +3 at 5th level.

The Emperor's Seal: The Legion of Two Thousand is widely recognized as having the direct blessing of the Emperor. The legionnaire gains a +2 competence bonus to all Charisma-related skill checks made with individuals who possess an Honor of 3 or higher.

Table 4-1: The Legion of Two Thousand

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Reflex Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+2	Never Stand Alone
2	+2	+3	+0	+3	The Emperor's Seal
3	+3	+3	+1	+3	Never Stand Alone
4	+4	+4	+1	+4	The Legion's Advance
5	+5	+4	+1	+4	Never Stand Alone

The Legion's Advance: The Legion of Two Thousand moves across the Empire fulfilling the Emperor's will. The legionnaire gains a +2 competence bonus on all Ride and Wilderness Lore checks.

THE LEGION OF TWO THOUSAND (NEW PATH)

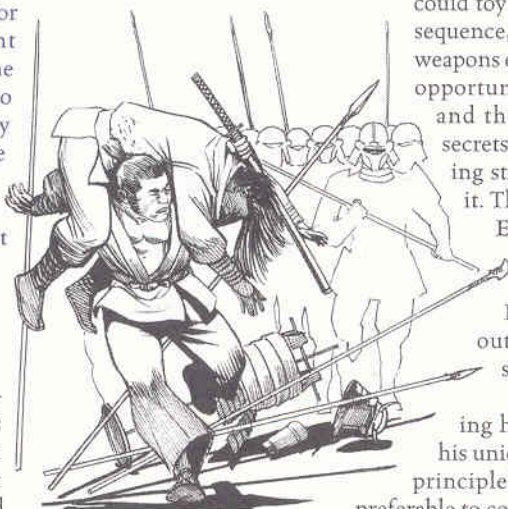
Technique Rank: 3

Requirements for Entry: Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 3, Honor 3+, Irreproachable advantage

Path of Entry: Any bushi school with a beginning Honor 3 or higher, Rank 2

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at Rank 3

Technique: Never Stand Alone — A legionnaire is trained to draw strength from his comrades. At any time, a legionnaire may have a number of selected individuals that he considers his "allies." This number is equal to the legionnaire's Void Ring. When fighting alongside his "allies" in a skirmish, the legionnaire gains a number of free Raises equal to his Insight Rank to be spent on any combat action during that skirmish. When in a battle, the legionnaire may alter the result of his skill roll up or down a number equal to his Insight Rank if fighting alongside at least one "ally." Members of the Legion of Two Thousand are automatically considered "allies," and others may be considered such if the legionnaire spends at least two weeks with them and engages in at least one skirmish at their side.



ANCESTOR: OTAKU TETSUKO

Otaku Tetsuko never had an opportunity to avoid the Kolat's grasp. She was indoctrinated in their ways from childhood, and knew only that their mission was a sacred one. She served as a loyal yojimbo to many different Unicorn who were also secretly Kolat, and took many lives to defend their unholy secrets. It was not until she saw the majesty of Lady Shinjo, returning to Rokugan after hundreds of years, that she realized the lies she had been told her entire life. Shinjo was a goddess. The Kolat were traitors. She willingly confessed her sins before her mistress, naming all those she knew who had likewise turned against the one true path. In recognition of her service, Shinjo permitted Tetsuko the honor of seppuku, purging the shame of her misdeeds from her name in death.

Even in Yomi, Tetsuko's spirit finds little comfort in her redemption. She frequently extends her reach to the mortal realm, to find those who stand on the edge of a precipice, hoping to aid them in avoiding the same mistakes she made in life.

PENITENT SOUL (ANCESTOR: OTAKU TETSUKO)

You may sacrifice your physical strength to gain stronger will.

Benefit: You may sacrifice a number of hit points equal to your character level to gain a bonus to any Will save equal to

the number of points sacrificed. Use of this ability may result in the gain of an Honor point if it is used to prevent you from being tempted into failing your duty (GM's discretion).

ANCESTOR: OTAKU TETSUKO

(6 POINTS)

You may choose to sacrifice a Wound level in order to gain two additional rolled dice on any roll made to resist an attempt to lure you away from your duty. This includes any attempt at sedition, seduction, temptation, or other situations as the GM permits. You may only sacrifice a number of Wound levels equal to your Insight Rank on any given roll. This must be declared before the roll is made.

ANCESTOR: TOGASHI KAZE

Togashi Kaze simultaneously ranks among the most infamous and well-loved ise zumi that have ever descended from the Dragon mountains to experience the Empire. He looked upon a Rokugan wherein the petty and greedy among the samurai could toy with the peasantry without fear of consequence, as the Emperor had forbade the use of weapons on the part of all heimin. Recognizing an opportunity to teach the peasants self-reliance and the samurai humility, Kaze taught the secrets of his newly developed unarmed fighting style to any peasant who wished to learn it. The results were so spectacular that the Emperor himself soon heard of them, but punished the monk when Kaze refused to demonstrate his art for Hantei III and his court. Kaze died without ever revealing his secrets to another samurai.

Togashi Kaze dwells in Yomi, offering his guidance to mortal souls who share his unique outlook, recognize and adhere to his principles: killing is for the cruel, avoidance is preferable to conflict, and defeat is unavoidable.

PEACEFUL HANDS (ANCESTOR: TOGASHI KAZE)

You possess your ancestor's gift for serenity and mercy.

Prerequisite: Improved Unarmed Strike

Benefit: When fighting unarmed, you may deal double normal unarmed damage if you choose to inflict subdual damage rather than lethal damage. If the victim of this feat dies as a result of your action or inaction, you lose all benefits of this feat for 48 hours, during which time you may not spend Void points. A death of which you are unaware or incapable of preventing does not invoke this penalty.

ANCESTOR: TOGASHI KAZE

(5 POINTS)

You may keep an additional die of damage for all unarmed attacks. The damage dealt by these attacks is considered stun damage, and will not kill any who suffer it. This damage may not reduce an opponent below the Down Wound level. Stun damage is recovered at a rate equal to three times an individual's Earth ring per hour. If the victim of this ability

dies as a result of your action or inaction, you lose all benefits of this ancestor for 48 hours, during which time you may not spend Void points. A death of which you are unaware or incapable of preventing does not invoke this penalty.

LORD MOON'S BONE

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

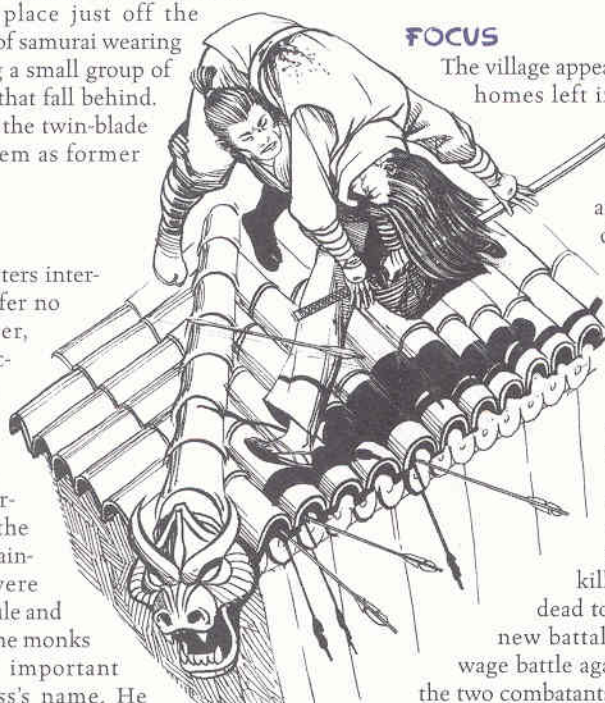
During their travels, the characters come across a vicious combat taking place just off the Emperor's Road. A group of samurai wearing no clan colors are chasing a small group of monks, slaughtering any that fall behind. The samurai are all using the twin-blade Niten style, marking them as former Dragon.

FOCUS

Assuming that the characters intervene, the samurai will offer no conversation whatsoever, and will attack the characters if they interpose themselves between the monks and samurai. They fight to the death, and only one monk survives. The monk thanks the characters profusely, explaining that the samurai were deserters from Hitomi's rule and that they were attacking the monks because they carry an important bundle in their mistress's name. He implores the characters to assist him in reaching the head of his order in the Spine of the World Mountains, at which point he will surrender his burden to a higher ranking monk. The monk will not discuss the contents of his bundle under any circumstances, nor will he permit it to leave his possession at any time.

STRIKE

The monks are actually minions of Bunrakuken, the sinister leader of a large moon cult. They have successfully found the ancient artifact known as Lord Moon's Bone and have stolen it before the Dragon could gather it. The Dragon samurai were loyal servants of Hitomi, acting to keep their agenda and their lady's plans concealed. While the monk has a normal appearance, there is no way to conceal the heinous Taint from both the Shadowlands and Darkness that Bunrakuken radiates, and the cultists will attack as soon as the characters near their rendezvous point. Assuming the characters survive the incident and gain possession of the Bone, they are of considerable interest to the Dragon Clan, until such time as they retrieve the artifact in preparation for Hitomi's duel with Onnotangu.



ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

While traveling, the characters come across a small village nestled quietly in an out-of-the-way valley in the Twilight Mountains. All signs point to a peaceful farming village with a small mine, most likely used for tax purposes. The only odd thing about this traditional village is that it is vacant. The village has been completely abandoned.

FOCUS

The village appears to have been abandoned recently, with homes left intact. There have been a few incidents where fires burned too high and consumed huts, but for the most part the village is fairly pristine. The exceptions are the bodies of various common animals, dogs, mules, goats, etc., that appear to have perished from some sort of plague or sickness. There are rather obvious tracks leading from the village to the southeast, indicating the village's residents left as a group.

STRIKE

The village has fallen prey to the blossoming conflict within the Shadowlands. A powerful Lost maho-tsukai traveled to the village and unleashed a sickness that killed many villagers. He then animated the dead to kill the rest, and promptly marched his new battalion of undead into the Shadowlands to wage battle against his rival, a powerful oni. Neither of the two combatants has any particular interest in the characters, although if they pose a significant threat the tsukai and oni could conceivably put aside their differences long enough to destroy the interlopers.

SINS OF THE PAST

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

During time spent within a city, the characters become embroiled in a long-standing feud between the two factions that dominate the city (use existing factions from your campaign, or use the Lion and Crane). Both sides accuse the other of espionage and violence, although there appears to be a great deal of confusion as to exactly what is taking place. The testimony of so many different samurai, however, cannot be discounted, and as outsiders the characters are asked to assist in the investigation by the local magistrate or governor.

FOCUS

Investigation leads to some interesting information. There have been sightings of Lion Clan samurai in secure Crane areas and vice versa, although the samurai in question behave quite curiously. After standing passively for a few moments, occasionally engaging someone in strange, almost nonsensical conversation, they inevitably round a corner or pass through a door and disappear, leaving even the quickest and most perceptive magistrates completely baffled as to what is happening. The investigation quells some hostilities between the two groups, but tensions continue to rise to the point where violence may erupt at any moment.

STRIKE

These incidents are not a result of espionage or anything quite so sordid. Oblivion's Gate is beginning to open deep in the Shadowlands, and as it does so the borders between spirit realms are thinning. What the samurai in the city are witnessing could be any number of things depending upon how the GM wishes to advance the encounter. They could be confused spirits from Yomi seeking to contact their descendants, malicious spirits from Gaki-do looking to cause violence to feed on, capricious entities from Chikushudo or Sakkaku who are amusing themselves with their wry tricks, or even genuinely amnesiac, disoriented spirits trapped in Meido who are aimlessly wandering in an attempt to remember their true names and lives.

IMPORTANT NPCS

IKUDAIU, PENITENT KOLAT MONK

Ikudaiu's life has never been simple. Even before his retirement, he was plagued with questions concerning all manner of philosophical and theological debates. He was cursed, it seemed, to question, something considered almost sinful in a society that embraced unthinking loyalties above all else. His service to the Dragon Clan ended shortly before his brother died, a loss that Ikudaiu felt very deeply. His brother was charged with administering a poor village in a barren region, and often had to work alongside his peasant subjects to prevent widespread starvation. After his death, other Dragon spoke of him with distaste over his actions, considering him of lesser station because of his "unclean" actions.

Ikudaiu's quiet outrage over his brother's fate quickly led to his introduction to the Kolat path. It took surprisingly little time for Ikudaiu to become well-entrenched in the organization, and even less for him to realize that he had made a terrible mistake. Yes, the samurai caste was arrogant; the doctrine the Kolat had adopted, however, went beyond mere social reform. But Ikudaiu knew all too well that any attempt to leave would result in his death. There was no escape from the Kolat. The simple monk resigned himself to a lifetime of mitigating the horrors committed by his fellow conspirators.

Oddly, the time finally came when Ikudaiu's affiliation with the Kolat allowed him to do something noble. When the Lying Darkness began consuming historical records, he was the first to realize the Tao would be threatened. He contacted the Kolat, hoping they might move it to safety. A Kolat thief stole it from the Imperial Palace, passing half off to Ikudaiu so

that if either were captured, some part would survive.

The thief vanished soon thereafter, consumed by the Lying Darkness. Ikudaiu gave the remaining half to a young Crane samurai-ko who already possessed a sterling reputation as an honorable warrior. He bade Daidoji Rekai protect the Tao from the Darkness. With precious time remaining, Ikudaiu penned several lengthy letters detailing his involvement with the Kolat and the depth and breadth of that organization's influence throughout the Empire. These he sent to numerous different agencies near and far in the hopes that one would receive it and act upon it. The Kitsuki family daimyo, the head sensei at the Doji magistrate school, the head of the Kuni Witch Hunters, and a handful of high-ranking Asako inquisitors and Shinjo magistrates were among the intended recipients of these confessions, but Ikudaiu died without ever knowing if the letters had been received.

Ikudaiu died the death of many monks throughout history: within a temple, his mind troubled by matters far too weighty to resolve in the course of a single lifetime.

IKUDAIU, KOLAT MONK

Male human Ink10: CR 10; Medium-size humanoid; HD 10d8 (48 hp); Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 15, flat-footed 13); Attack +13/+8 melee (1d6+6, +4 quarterstaff); SA improved unarmed strike, unarmed damage 1d8; SQ Improved void use, purity; Honor 2; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +14; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 11; Max Void Points 5.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +13, Concentration +13, Hide +16, Search +14, Sense Motive +13, Spot +16; Depths of the Void, Fortune's Breath, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Perceived Honor, Prepared (Ancestor: Mirumoto Takeda), Self no Self, Soul of the Four Winds, Toughness, Void Use.

Possessions of note: +2 amulet of natural armor, +4 quarterstaff, +2 haori of resistance.

IKUDAIU, KOLAT MONK

Air: 4

Awareness: 6

Earth: 4

Fire: 3

Intelligence: 5

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Four Temples Monk (Insight Rank 4)

Honor: 2.8

Glory: 2.0

Advantages: Allies (many among the Dragon Clan)

Disadvantages: Dark Secret (Kolat), Obligation (Kolat)

Skills: Calligraphy 4, Cipher 4, Courtier 4, Etiquette 5, Hand-to-hand (Jiu-jutsu) 1, Heraldry 2, History 5, Investigation 3, Lore (Kolat) 4, Lore (monastic traditions) 4, Meditation 5, Shintao 4, Sincerity 5, Tea Ceremony 3, Theology 4
Kiho: Freeze the Lifeblood, Stain Upon the Soul, Steal the Air Dragon

OKURA NO ONI

Okura no Oni began life as a spawn of the oni lord Akuma no Oni, another in a string of destructive children that existed only to foment chaos. Okura was selected randomly from Akuma's brood to bear the name of a mortal after the Oni Lord successfully corrupted the Jade Champion. The demon soon appeared alongside the Lion armies, defending Shiro Matsu

from the invading Unicorn forces while Ikoma Tsanuri and the bulk of the clan's military might was absent.

Towering above the Matsu troops, Okura cut a wide swath through all who dared stand against the Lion. Unicorn fell before her blade like wheat before the scythe, and she rejoiced in the ecstasy of murder. But somewhere deep within her twisted black heart, something changed. Perhaps it was the camaraderie between the Lion samurai fighting at her side, or the influence of Kitsu Okura's soul. Regardless, Oni no Okura has begun to experience strange sensations and feelings, things she has never before encountered. She struggles daily with these urgings, and has thus far suppressed them. Somehow, though, she fears it is only a matter of time before she can do so no longer.

OKURA NO ONI

Female outsider (oni) Sam 12: CR 21; Huge-size outsider; HD 12d8+12d10+96 (216 hp); Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 50 ft.; AC 24 (-2 size, +3 Dex, +8 natural; touch 19, flat-footed 21); Attack +21/+16/+11 melee (4d6+13, gargantuan +3 no-dachi); SA smite good, spell-like abilities; SQ damage resistance 10/+4 (jade), Jigoku sense, oni qualities; Honor 0; AL LE; SV Fort +20, Ref +15, Will +14; Str 24, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Battle +29, Bluff +15, Iaijutsu Focus +30, Intimidate +30, Knowledge Shadowlands +12, Listen +14, Sense Motive +29, Spot +14; Cleave, Great Ki Shout, Improved Initiative, Improved Critical (no-dachi), Ki Shout, Power Attack, Remain Conscious, Weapon Focus (no-dachi)

Possessions: Gargantuan +3 no-dachi, lamellar armor

Special Abilities: Okura no Oni possesses the following special abilities:

Oni Qualities: Okura no Oni possesses all oni qualities as identified in *Creatures of Rokugan*.

Smite good (Su): Once per day, Okura no Oni may attempt to smite good with a melee attack. She adds her Charisma modifier (+3 normally) to the attack roll and her hit dice (+12 normally) to the damage.

Spell-like abilities — At will: detect evil, detect good, detect magic, protection from good; 3/day — cure serious wounds (self only), greater magic weapon, haste (self only). All are as cast by a 10th level sorcerer (DC 17 + spell level).

Jigoku Sense (Ex): Okura no Oni can sense all passages to Jigoku within one mile.

Note: These statistics represent Okura no Oni before she renounces her ties to Jigoku and embraces the path of honor. Statistics for her and her spawn after this event can be found in *Creatures of Rokugan*.

OKURA NO ONI

Air: 3

Reflexes: 5

Earth: 6

Fire: 3

Agility: 6

Water: 4

Strength: 8

Shadowlands Taint: Innate

School/Rank: None (possesses abilities equivalent to Akodo Bushi 3)

Honor: 0.8

Glory: 6.3

Advantages: Kharmic Tie (Akuma no Oni)

Disadvantages: Obligation (Kitsu Okura)

Skills: Battle 6, Defense 5, Hand-to-hand 5, Hunting 5, Iaijutsu 5, Kenjutsu 7, Lore (Shadowlands) 7

Special Abilities: Okura no Oni possesses the following special abilities:

Carapace: Okura no Oni has Carapace 7.

Smite Honor: Once per day, Okura no Oni can target any one honorable foe with a smite attack. This attack rolls two additional dice to hit and two additional dice to damage. If the target is not honorable (Honor 2+), the attack is used for the day but does not benefit from the extra dice.

Spell-like Abilities: Okura no Oni may cast the following spells once per day as if she were a shugenja of Insight Rank 5: Cloak of Night, Regrow the Wound, Sympathetic Energies, The Tie that Binds, Wind-borne Speed.

Jigoku Sense: Okura no Oni can instinctively sense any portals to Jigoku within one mile.

CULT OF THE DESTROYER, ACT IV: FINDING SUPPORT

SYNOPSIS

This adventure sets the characters in a remote Crane outpost that is still manned by a few Daidoji. In the aftermath of his disastrous party, Otomo Banu informs them where to find the general Seppun Yakkai, a venerable samurai who is able to give the characters the military might required to take on the gaijin cult. The characters find him sympathetic, and he willingly gives them authorization to use Seppun troops. A tea ceremony intended to refresh the characters goes sour, with the death of the moon and an attack by cultist assassins.

SCENE ONE: ARRIVAL AT ZENSHOU TETSU

At least one thing is crystal clear from Hirofumi's betrayal. The Cult of the Destroyer has a long reach and drastic steps must be taken to stop them from accomplishing their foul deeds in Rokugan. Otomo Banu suggests that harsher conduct is in order, that the characters must find and destroy their base of operations. To do that, he directs them to find a Seppun with authority to release Seppun troops into their care. According to the Seppun in Banu's court, general Seppun Yakkai left for Zenshou Tetsu a few weeks back to find a permanent solution for the Crane/Crab border problem.

Zenshou Tetsu can be found a few days' ride west of the Crane city Yama ue no ho ni Umi Mura. Zenshou Tetsu is the last Crane outpost before crossing the Crane/Crab border. The ride to Zenshou Tetsu is strangely uneventful, and the characters do not run into many obstacles or samurai.

Read the following as the characters approach the gates.

At first glance, Zenshou Tetsu appears to be a small outpost. The wooden walls are unimpressive and seem flimsy from afar. The building seems to be dilapidated with peeling plaster falling off the wooden frame. No guards seem to be present above the walls. No movement can be seen.

As you ride closer to the outpost you sense an unseen presence watching your every move. The gates slowly open, and a single man stands in the gateway. Dressed in the powder blue of the Crane Clan, he gestures you forward. As you pass the gates, you marvel at the thickness of the walls — they seem twice as reinforced as you thought. The man raises his hand.

"Who are you strangers, and why have you come to this station?" He is brief and curt. His eyes burn into yours, demanding an answer.

The keeper of the gate is Daidoji Han, a valiant samurai who has guarded the border for the last fifteen years. Allow the characters to explain themselves as best they can. Han appreciates straight talk and will not stand for any roundabout explanation. If the characters reveal they seek Seppun Yakkai. Read the following:

Daidoji Han nods when he hears your mission. "Seppun Yakkai-sama arrived at our humble outpost nearly three weeks ago and remains here still. He has taken a liking to our military library and leaves it only infrequently." He makes a strange hand gesture, and you feel the tension in the air diminish, as if dozens of unseen guardians have decided you are not a threat. You idly wonder how many invisible Daidoji are present.

"Follow me," Han says curtly, and turns to lead the way to the main building.

SCENE TWO: A PLEASANT CONVERSATION

The inside of the outpost is just as deceptive as its walls. The outpost is large, with wide-open areas for training soldiers, and though the building looked shoddy on the outside, the inside is just as serviceable as any Lion fortress. Han leads the characters up a narrow flight of stairs and down a long corridor. At the end of the corridor is a reinforced wooden door. Beyond that door lies the library, full of scrolls about strategy and tactics.

Seppun Yakkai is reading a scroll when the party enters. Read the following:

Daidoji Han pushes open the heavy door and waits for you to enter. It is quiet inside, with only a single person taking in the wisdom from the shelves and shelves of scrolls. He is a stocky man slightly past his prime, but his stance and his hands callused from countless hours of practice tell you that the man is not yet past his battle days. He looks up from the scroll spread out in front of him and smiles.

"My Daidoji hosts tell me that you have come a great distance to find me," he says. "Tell me, what can I do for you?"

Daidoji Han leaves the characters alone with Seppun Yakkai. Allow the characters to explain to Yakkai everything that has occurred so far with the murders. When the characters are finished explaining, Yakkai nods gravely.

"I am here to assess the defenses along the Crane and Crab border, and to make sure that fighting does not ignite

between the two clans in this time of great stress and famine. I would have moved on to another outpost by now, but I was held by the knowledge captured in this library. It contains some fascinating works, even a few on gaijin lore. I must help you, good samurai, for the Seppun defend many great men and women in the Empire. Their loss endangers others."

If the characters tell Yakkai that he himself might be in danger, Yakkai laughs. He says, "I would not presume to be so arrogant as to believe they would wish to destroy me, of all the Seppun." He smiles. "You have traveled far for this meeting. Perhaps you would like to join me for a tea ceremony, rest, then leave in the morning?"

Yakkai escorts the characters out of the library where a silent Daidoji guard is waiting. The guard bows and escorts the PCs to their rooms.

SCENE THREE: DEATH OF THE MOON

The characters may now remove their armor and get ready for the tea ceremony with Yakkai. Whenever they are ready, the same guard is ready to escort the characters to a small garden just behind the main building. When the characters arrive, read the following:

The garden is small but lovingly created. Its purity and beauty seems to you like the calm in the whirlwind of war and destruction that surrounds you all. The garden is full of flowers rarely seen outside the Crane lands, and the flowers surround a small but functional shrine. Seppun Yakkai waits for you next to it, kneeling on a cushion on a mat laid out on the ground. The tea set in front of him seems looks antique and precious. When Yakkai sees you, he bows.

"Thank you for indulging me in my passion," he says.

Any character who succeeds at a Diplomacy check (DC 15)/Etiquette roll (TN 10) realizes that Seppun Yakkai is doing him a great honor by entrusting the character to use his antique set. The characters kneel in front of Yakkai on cushions, as he is. When the characters are ready, he begins the ceremony.

The characters must make a Tea Ceremony check (DC 15/TN 15) to keep from disgracing themselves. If a PC rolls 25 or higher, Seppun Yakkai is impressed with the character's proficiency with the art, and the character gains his respect. If the character fails, he fumbles a bit or makes small errors, but Yakkai tactfully does not acknowledge them. The ceremony takes several hours to finish and leaves the characters in a peaceful mood. The characters and Yakkai watch the sun set, and the full moon is beautiful. However, just as the last parts of the ceremony are wrapping up, read the following:

Seppun Yakkai looks up and his eyes widen. You can feel the shock radiating from him, and you look up — just in time to see the moon turn blood red. Without a sound, without warning, the moon disappears. Like a shockwave spreading out from the disappearance of the moon, the stars blink out one by one. The Daidoji manning the walls suddenly break their impassive vigil and shout to each other.

A gust of wind blows over the camp and the torches extinguish at once. The only light that shines on you is faint, and comes from the torches inside the main

building. Before you can react, assassins jump over the walls and assault the Daidoji soldiers. A group vaults past the Daidoji and run in your direction. The Cult has caught up to you — or are they after the venerable Yakkai-sama?

Seppun Yakkai calmly sets his teacup down in front of him, and with a swift iaijutsu strike he cuts an assassin in half. He stands and gets into a battle ready stance. "I suppose I was wrong about the assassins," Yakkai says grimly. "For that, I apologize."

There are roughly ten assassins (adjust for your group's skills, keeping in mind that the Cult is yet small) here to kill the characters and Seppun Yakkai. Three are busy with occupying the Daidoji soldiers that man the walls, attacking them with aiguchi. Five stalk the PCs and Seppun Yakkai. Two run with impressive speed and enter the main building. If you believe the characters need help dispatching the assassins, assign a few Daidoji guards to aid them. The darkness is disorienting to all except the assassins, who are accustomed to such things. The Daidoji guards stationed along the wall kill three assassins as soon as they are accustomed to the darkness. Once the five assassins are neutralized, Seppun Yakkai gasps and shouts, "The assassins must be going after the library!"

He charges directly into the front door. If the PCs follow Yakkai into the building, the two assassins strike at Yakkai directly when Yakkai and the party are on the stairs. The strike has the possibility to disable Yakkai but will not kill him outright. If the party does not follow Yakkai into the building, he walks outside in a few minutes, flanked by two Daidoji warriors who helped protect him from the assassins.

CULTIST ASSASSINS

Male human ronin Nin9: CR 9; Medium-sized Humanoid (human); HD 9d6+27; hp 45; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19 (touch 16, flat-footed 15); Atk aiguchi +12/+7 or sai +12/+7, 1d4+3 damage; SQ Poison Use, Shadow Run, Sneak Attack +5d6, Speed of Darkness, Uncanny Dodge; Honor: 0; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 13; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 4 in.

Dojo: None; Kata: None.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Climb +7, Hide +13, Jump +7, Move Silently +13, Spot +5; Expertise, Improved Disarm, Sneaky Feet, Versatile (Hide, Move Silently), Void Use

Possessions: aiguchi, sai, ashigaru armor, amulet of natural armor +2

DAIDOJI BUSHI

Male human Crane Nin4/Ftr2: CR 6; Medium-sized Humanoid (human); HD 4d6+8 plus 2d10+4; hp 40; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (touch 13, flat-footed 15); Atk +1 katana +9/+4, 1d10+4 damage; SQ Class Skill — Hide (Family Bonus), Ninja Dodge (+1), Sneak Attack +2d6, Speed of Darkness, Uncanny Dodge; Honor: 2; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +11; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 10; Maximum Void: 2; Height 5 ft. 4 in.

Dojo: None; Kata: None.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani), Climb +11, Hide +14, Jump +11, Listen +7, Move Silently +14, Search +4, Tumble +10; Dark Guardian (Ancestor: Daidoji Kasumiko), Lightning Stealth, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus (Yumi), Void Use

Possessions: +1 katana, wakizashi, +1 yumi, kote of armor +2, 20 arrows.

CULTIST ASSASSINS

Earth: 4

Water: 4

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 3

School/Rank: None (Insight Level 3)

Dojo: None

Glory: -4.5

Status: -0.5

Honor: 0.5

Skills: Defense 5, Hunting 3, Jiu-jutsu 4, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 2, Manipulation 3, Tantojutsu 5, Sincerity 3, Stealth 5

Kata: None

DAIDOJI BUSHI

Earth: 3

Water: 2

Strength: 3

Fire: 3

Agility: 4

Air: 3

Void: 3

School/Rank: Daidoji Harrier 2

Dojo: None

Glory: 0.5

Status: 1.3

Honor: 1.1

Advantages: Quick

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle 3, Hunting 3, Kenjutsu 4, Kyujutsu 4, Stealth 5, Yumi 3

Kata: None

SCENE FOUR: DEPARTURE

If Seppun Yakkai survives the battle, read the following after the PCs dispatch the assassins. If he does not, skip this section.

Seppun Yakkai sheathes his katana and frowns up at the sky. "What does this mean?" he says to the sky. "Do these assassins have anything to do with this supernatural darkness?" He turns to you, his eyes steely with determination. "I will marshal what forces I can to aid you, my friends, but I fear we are stretched thin at the moment."

Seppun Yakkai gives the characters his fan and a letter to the current quartermaster of Kyuden Seppun. The letter gives the characters the power to command several units of Seppun guards for the protection of the Empire. The Daidoji at Zenshou Tetsu provide the characters with fresh horses, and the characters may depart for Kyuden Seppun, authority in hand.

If Seppun Yakkai does not survive the battle, the characters are now in a quandary. Can they defeat the Cult of the Betrayer on their own? It would now be best to figure out if there were any favors the characters could call in. Another thing the characters can try is to go to Kyuden Seppun and try to convince them that it is in their best interest to follow their quest to destroy the gaijin cult.

Once the characters leave Zenshou Tetsu, you may lead them into Act Five.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FIRE AND SHADOW

What once had been a hero tore recklessly through the forests below Kyuden Hitomi. Its form was like water, flowing and changing. In one instant, it was a young woman, in the next, an old man. Each change wracked its body with pain. It fell to its knees beside a still pond, splashing the water upon its face, seeking some measure of comfort.

It rested for a moment and collected itself. It remembered a time long ago. Once, it had been a human girl. It had served its master well and gained fame as one of the greatest heroes of the land. But something had gone wrong. During its greatest adventure, it had nearly died. Rather than fail and doom the Empire, it had made a fateful choice — and now the time had come to repay its debt.

As the ripples faded, the creature looked at its reflection in the water. It saw no face at all, only an eggshell-smooth patch of featureless flesh.

"Why?" it moaned, despite having no mouth to speak. "What am I becoming?"

Something tugged at what remained of its soul. It felt drawn to the southwest. There, it would find answers. But would those answers bring it peace? The reflection shifted again, becoming that of a beautiful Scorpion girl wearing a tattered cloth mask.

Unable to bear the sight of the image, Shosuro leapt to her feet and continued running through the forest.

The boundaries between the Spirit Realms were already growing thin. Soon the Gate would open, and all the minions of Nothing could spread through the Celestial Order like leaves upon the wind. But that time had not yet come. For now, only those with great power and the knowledge to use it cautiously could find the cracks between the realms.

The master of shadows stepped cautiously down the darkened hall. Even with all his power, he dared not move too swiftly in such a place. In the mortal realm, Kyuden Bayushi was a deadly place. In the grey realm of Meido, the danger was greatly increased by the nature of the being who dwelled here.

"Who are you and what are you doing in my home?" the dry voice grated behind him.

The ninja turned slowly, not truly surprised that he had been detected without realizing it. "Does not the Father of Scorpions know his son?" Adorai asked in a mild voice. He turned to face the Kami Bayushi.

The founder of the Scorpion Clan stood half cloaked in shadow. His face was covered with only a scrap of red cloth. His burning eyes stared at Adorai with a quiet, calculating intensity. "You are no son of mine," he replied, eyes narrowing in recognition. "You have given your name to the Darkness."

"But you know me."

"You are one of the ninja," Bayushi answered. "One of the ones the Hantei ordered to be put to death when he could no longer stomach your murders."

"Goju Adorai," the ninja replied, bowing deeply. "Fortunately the Hantei's killers were not as talented as mine. I escaped, with the aid of the Lying Darkness."

"Then return to your darkness," Bayushi said. "You are not welcome here."

"Have you abandoned me, mighty Bayushi?" Adorai asked. "Merely because I surrendered to the Darkness? Strange, you did not hold Shosuro to such a high standard."

The hiss of steel rang through the darkened hallway and Bayushi's sword was in his hand. Instantly he moved to Adorai's side, the long blade laid across the ninja's throat. "Do not speak that name, Shadowspawn. You have no right."

"Will you kill me?" Adorai asked, a slightly worried tone creeping into his voice.

"Not so long as you keep a respectful tongue in your head, Goju," the Scorpion said. He was silent for a moment, then withdrew his blade. "As much as I despise you, you are all that stands between the Lying Darkness and oblivion."

Adorai smiled. "You see much that is unseen and hear much that is unheard. I am impressed, Father of Scorpions."

"My clan knows the Darkness," Bayushi said, sheathing his katana and pacing in a slow circle around Adorai, "and I know what the Scorpion know. The Darkness does not truly understand mortals. It is a strange and unknowable force, but gods and mortals are equally mysterious to it. It does not truly understand this universe it believes it has created. I believe that it cannot understand, and remain what it is. It stands apart from reality, and thus it retains the full power of Nothing... but even though it cannot understand, it still wishes to know more."

"And that is my purpose," Adorai said. "That is why I and my fellow Goju were allowed to retain some sense of identity. The Darkness hides behind us, and uses us to understand. We are translators, for lack of a better word."

"And does the Darkness have a message for me?" Bayushi asked.

"No," Adorai said. "My master did not send me here. I came of my own accord."

"Why?" Bayushi asked.

"Because Shosuro has been released from her crystal prison," Adorai answered. "The Darkness hunts her even as we speak."

Bayushi's eyes widened, an unfamiliar expression for the Father of Scorpions. "You lie," Bayushi said with a sneer. "Why would you tell me this?"

"Why do you think?" Adorai asked. "I am the most favored minion of the Lying Darkness — but it desires Shosuro more. If she is found, she will replace me."

"A selfish betrayal?" Bayushi replied. "You truly have forgotten what it means to be a Scorpion."

"Have I?" Adorai retorted, his face growing heated. "For centuries I have served this foul beast and retained my independence. It believes it is my master, but I have twisted it to my bidding. In the Darkness' name I see the whole of the Celestial Order twisted and chained to its bidding, but believe me when I say that were it not for me the fate that awaits your precious existence would be a great deal worse. At least in my order there will be a place for you, mighty Bayushi, even if that place is a slave... is that not preferable to never having existed at all? We both know that if Shosuro is consumed by the Darkness she will show no such mercy."

Bayushi did not reply, only glared at the ninja in silence.

"And I know that you will not kill me, Bayushi," Adorai said with a small smile, "because you know I am right. You know I am the only thing preventing the Darkness from merely consuming all that exists, rather than playing these games. I have given you a chance."

"Leave," Bayushi commanded.

Goju Adorai bowed deeply and vanished.

The Kami Bayushi sat on a stone in the caverns beneath his castle, staring into the depths of a still lake. This part of his home was closest to the mortal realm. He often visited the lake to hear the whispers of his children, and find peace.

Today that peace was not forthcoming.

Of all his followers, Bayushi had loved Shosuro the most. She was unlike the others... she was a true mystery. He had always suspected her origins were not mundane, but had never dug too deeply for the truth. The secret, he feared, would be like a snowflake — once grasped in his hand its beauty would be gone forever.

After her return from the Shadowlands, he had seen the slow change that came over her. She had become more distant, withdrawn. With each day that passed she seemed to lose some sense of herself. One day, she left Kyuden Bayushi determined to control the powers growing within her. Bayushi had not seen her since, though he never doubted that she found what she sought.

Goju Adorai had not lied to him. Through the lake, Bayushi could extend his senses into the mortal realm. He felt Shosuro's presence there once more, confused, disjointed. She was seeking... something. Perhaps she was seeking some way to be free of the Darkness' touch. Perhaps she was seeking to join with it.

Bayushi could not return to the mortal realm; such a feat was beyond even the Father of Scorpions. Yet he was not without power. There was still one being who might yet save the first Scorpion Thunder...

The one who shared her soul.

"Kachiko," the Kami whispered through the surface of the lake. "You are needed..."

FIRE AND SHADOW - TIMELINE

YEAR 1132, MONTH OF THE OX (MID-WINTER)

SHIRO SHIBA FALLS

Pressing his armies forward, Yoritomo succeeds in laying siege to and ultimately capturing Shiro Shiba, the foremost military outpost in the Phoenix lands. The Shiba have no choice but to allow their home to be captured when it becomes clear that Yoritomo is dividing his forces, with half attacking the castle and half marching north toward the Isawa provinces. Shiba Tsukune honors her family's ancient vow of loyalty and orders her men to abandon Shiro Shiba, hastening north to defend the Isawa from Yoritomo's forces.

Shortly after Shiro Shiba is seized by the Mantis, one of Yoritomo's advisors urges him to press the advantage and follow through with his full forces into the Isawa provinces. Yoritomo declines, citing a need for his men to rest and re-equip. The advisor persists despite the Son of Storms' increasing agitation until finally he cuts the advisor down in a rage. When the advisor's face melts into nothingness as he dies, Yoritomo orders all his forces to pull back from the Isawa border to hold the Shiba provinces until he can determine the meaning of this strange portent.

THE DARKNESS ATTACKS SHINOMEN MORI

A short time after the resurrected Hida Yakamo leads the Naga to aid the Crab at Shiro Hiruma, the Lying Darkness's minions attack the Naga city of Siksa, near Shinomen Mori's edge. Yakamo and the Shasyahkar lead their Naga army against the

Darkness, crushing it utterly with their military might and the purity of their magic (and the Jade Hand). Yakamo orders the Naga to amass all their forces in a single great army to stand against the Darkness when the final conflict arises.

THE GREY CRANE'S LEGACY

The two sons of Kakita Toshimoko, Kakita Ichiro and Seppun Toshiken, confront their father. Both Toshiken and Ichiro are deeply resentful of Toshimoko's failures as a father, neglecting his children in favor of his position as sensei and his hedonistic personal pursuits. When confronted, Toshimoko admits his failures, but insists that he had little choice but to fulfill his duties. He asks for his sons' forgiveness, and further invites Toshiken to join him in executing his duties as Emerald Champion. While the Grey Crane is speaking to Toshiken, Ichiro draws a knife and prepares to kill his father. Toshiken swiftly cuts his half-brother down.

ADORAI'S BETRAYAL

With the return of Shosuro, Goju Adorai realizes that his own influence over the Lying Darkness is waning. He realizes that, if Shosuro should supplant him as the Darkness' foremost mortal minion, his own plans will be threatened. The Darkness will likely resume its original goal of unmaking all of creation, rather than remaking it in its image as Adorai has convinced it to do. Passing through Oblivion's Gate, Adorai secretly seeks out the one soul in all of creation who might still stop Shosuro — Bayushi. Adorai confronts the Kami, reveals that Shosuro has returned, then swiftly escapes, trusting in the First Scorpion to do the rest. The Kami's spirit returns to the mortal realm, as it often has in the past, manifesting in Sleeping Lake beneath Kyuden Bayushi and patiently waiting for the Scorpion Champion to reply.

A CHAMPION IS BORN

The half-dragon Hoshi's human wife Eisai bears a son, whom they name Togashi Yoshune. Born with the power of a dragon and of a mother on the cusp of enlightenment, the infant is assured a great destiny. Even at Yoshune's birth, Hoshi recognizes the soul of his father within the infant. The entire Dragon Clan rejoices at Togashi's return.

YEAR 1132,
MONTH OF THE
TIGER (LATE
WINTER)

YAKAMO'S ASCENSION

Enraged at Hitomi's replacement of her husband as the new Lady Moon, Amaterasu commits *jigai*, the ancient ritual seppuku of noble women. Her despair and pain are enormous, and the former Hida Yakamo senses her grief through his link to the Naga Akasha. He reaches out to her, and she draws him to her. Yakamo acts as her second and aids Amaterasu in finishing the ritual, at which point she willingly passes her divinity to him. Yakamo ascends to the Celestial Heavens as the new Lord Sun, perpetrating the strange kharmic tie he has always borne with Hitomi.

THE AGASHA'S WARNING

Agasha Gennai, the newly appointed Master of Air, advises the other Elemental Masters that Agasha Hamanari, a young shugenja with a gift for prophecy, has seen a vision of Asako Sagoten, son of the first Asako and perhaps Isawa's most powerful student. The vision brings a warning regarding a vague yet devastating assault on the spirit realms by a living shadow, an entity with no form or name. Most of the Council disregards the warning, but Gennai and his allies continue to press the matter. The ensuing debate limits the Isawa's ability to respond to the Mantis invasion, allowing Yoritomo to continue occupying the Agasha and Shiba provinces.

THE HISTORIES ARE CONSUMED

The Ikoma Histories, perhaps the single most complete and accurate historical record in Rokugan, are utterly destroyed by the Lying Darkness. The loss of so much history is a terrible blow to the Lion and other historians throughout the Empire, but it is not the only catastrophe of this sort. Throughout the Empire, archives of historical and genealogical records are wiped clean by minions of the Lying Darkness in an attempt to destroy Rokugan's connection to its past. At a loss for what else to do, the Ikoma immediately begin compiling what meager historical records exist elsewhere in the Lion lands in order to rebuild what they have lost.

KACHIKO'S DREAM

Scorpion Champion Bayushi Kachiko has a disturbing dream. She sees the Kami Bayushi manifest in the lake beneath her castle. He calls out to her, pleading that she aid him in saving Shosuro. Though Shosuro is very close to being lost to the Darkness, she cannot truly be consumed so long as Kachiko, her fellow Thunder, still shares her soul. Soon, Bayushi warns, Shosuro will come for Kachiko.

LOSS OF THE TRUE TAO

Kolat agents steal the most complete copy of the Tao (including Isawa Osugi's New Tao) from Otosan Uchi in hopes of preserving it before the Lying Darkness can destroy it as it has destroyed other important historical records. Goju Adorai dispatches his minions to destroy the Kolat agent responsible for the theft. The agent is slain and the scrolls he carries consumed by the darkness, but not before he passes off half the Tao to the monk Ikudaiu, a fellow Kolat. Ikudaiu then delivers the remaining Tao to the young Crane warrior Daidoji Rekai so that it might remain in sight of the Empire but well protected by the Daidoji family.

THE DRAGON STAND UNITED

Hoshi, son of Togashi, assumes leadership of the Dragon Clan in the wake of Hitomi's ascension. As his first act, Hoshi summons the Togashi from their scattered exile and restores them to their rightful place among the Dragon. He also inducts those who have sworn fealty to him as the Hoshi sect and permits Hitomi's followers to remain intact as a sect bearing her name, solidifying the three orders of ise zumi who serve the Dragon Clan. Hoshi recognizes the threat posed by the Lying Darkness, as did Hitomi before him, and begins making plans for the Dragon to stand against the shadows when the inevitable conflict comes.

A NEW SCORPION CHAMPION

Scorpion Champion Bayushi Kachiko steps down from her position, designating Bayushi Yojiro as her replacement. Some bristle at the appointment, but Kachiko's admiration of Yojiro is well-known so there are no arguments. As her chosen heir assumes control of the clan's activities, Kachiko begins preparing herself to face the entity that was once called Shosuro.

YEAR 1133, MONTH OF THE HARE (EARLY SPRING)

KITSU MOTSO ASSUMES COMMAND

In the aftermath of Shiro Yojin falling to the Crane, and with the Clan Champion Ikoma Tsanuri absent in the Crab lands, the renowned general Kitsu Motso assumes command of all remaining military forces in the Lion lands. Motso is disgusted by the actions of the Jade Champion Kitsu Okura, and sends word to the Unicorn that he plans to purge the Lion of all corruption. When the Unicorn offer to support him in his quest, he refuses their aid — this is a Lion matter.

THE CRANE CIVIL WAR ENDS

In the courtyard of Shiro Yojin, Daidoji Uji prepares to commit seppuku to atone for his unintentional disregard of Doji Kuwanan's orders. Kuwanan arrives and orders Uji to put his blade away, claiming that he is of far more use to the clan alive than dead. Uji rises and reaffirms his oath of fealty to serve Kuwanan, ending the hostilities between their forces. Even those among the Doji who called for Uji's death for treason stand firmly behind their Champion, all recognizing that some sinister force afoot throughout the Empire has been manipulating the Crane for some time, and it is this force that is their true enemy.

AMBITION'S VENGEANCE

Driven mad by the power of the reformed Bloodsword Ambition, the ronin Sanzo is drawn inexorably to the small palace where Emperor Toturi I now dwells. There, the Emperor is being tended in secrecy by the Empress Isawa Kaede in his attempt to overcome the Darkness's influence within him. The Bloodsword senses the presence of Toturi, the man that caused the blade to be shattered many years before in the Scorpion Coup, and it drives Sanzo to execute its revenge. Fortunately for Sanzo, Toturi's hiding place is guarded only by Kaede's magic and the sword seems quite adept at guiding the ronin through the wards. Sanzo succumbs to the sword's influence and inflicts a savage wound upon the weakened Emperor. Before he can strike the killing blow, Sanzo regains control of himself and flees into the forest. Kaede arrives to find Toturi mortally wounded and Sanzo gone.

WHAT'S NEW

FALLING TO THE DARKNESS

The following section is updated and adapted from *Way of the Ninja*. The process by which an individual becomes a minion of the Lying Darkness is somewhat different prior to the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, so it is presented here both for accuracy and the sake of convenience.

SHADOW POINTS

The Shadow Point mechanic in the d20 system works in a manner identical to that of the Shadowlands Taint, as described in *Rokugan*. Only the method by which Shadow Points are accumulated is different. The Lying Darkness requires some form of willing capitulation on the part of its target. They must somehow accept the Lying Darkness' power.

Any time the following section directs a character to make a resist attempt, he must make a Will save (DC 15) or gain a Shadow Point. Each time after the first time a character makes such a save (whether successful or not) the DC increases by 1. After the Twenty-Seven Days of Darkness event occurs, the DC for all such saves increases by 4. Following the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the means by which Shadow Points are gained changes drastically (see *Way of the Ninja* for details).

SHADOW POINTS

The process by which a character gains Shadow Points is described beginning on page 147 of the *Game Master's Guide*. In addition, Shadow Points can be gained a number of new ways during this period, as described below. Any time the following section directs a character to make a resist attempt, he must make a Void roll vs. TN 10. This TN increases by 2 each time he makes another attempt (successful or not). After the Twenty-Seven Days of Darkness occurs, the TN for all such rolls increases by 10. Following the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, the means by which Shadow Points are gained changes drastically (see *Way of the Ninja* for details).

NONHUMANS AND THE LYING DARKNESS

The Lying Darkness is not as widespread and recognized as the Shadowlands Taint, and resistances to its influence seem to be rarer as well. The Naga are completely immune to its corruption the same way they are immune to the Taint, but the Nezumi are not. Nezumi can become minions of the Lying Darkness, though it rarely bothers to seek such minions. Shadowlands creatures can also become Darkness spawn, but until the death of Fu Leng the Darkness was very cautious about consuming such victims lest it draw its old enemy's attention. Since the Day of Thunder, it has eagerly consumed Shadowlands creatures, adding their power to its own.

If a character's Shadow Points ever exceed his Void, he immediately becomes a spawn of the Lying Darkness, losing all former family benefits. The character's appearance remains the same, though his facial features might vanish if he becomes unduly agitated or loses concentration. A minion of the Lying Darkness can also voluntarily alter his own appearance in this manner (either to disguise himself or terrify someone). Lack of eyes, nose, and mouth in no way interferes with a Darkness spawn's ability to speak or sense his environment.

GAINING SHADOW POINTS

Dreams — By visiting an individual through dreams, the Lying Darkness can attempt to corrupt that individual. It cannot visit just anyone in this manner. Only a soul consumed with excessive fear, desire, or regret can be approached. The Darkness manifests in the dream, most likely as a loved one, and encourages the dreamer to indulge in his darkest impulses. If he does so, he must make a resist attempt. A sleeper who wears any form of crystal on his person cannot be visited in this manner.

Curiosity — In seeking the Darkness, one risks welcoming it into one's soul. Upon first investigating the Lying Darkness (whether the individual realizes he is investigating the Darkness is irrelevant) the character must make a resist attempt. This is only applicable the very first time an individual seeks out the Darkness. A person carrying crystal is immune to this effect, though the first time he seeks out the Darkness without crystal on his person he must resist as normal.

Proximity to Darkness — Though rarer than the Shadowlands Taint, some places and items are suffused with the power of the Lying Darkness. Mori Kage Castle is a good example, as is the monastery of the moon cultist Bunrakuken. In such places a character carrying no crystal must make a daily resist attempt or gain a Shadow Point. Any character with a Shadow Brand automatically gains a Shadow Point.

Bargaining — Any person with at least one Shadow Point can be detected and contacted by the Lying Darkness at any time. The Darkness may attempt to bargain with this individual, offering power in return for obedience. A soul who agrees to these terms immediately gains a Shadow Point and is not allowed a resist attempt.

Coercion — If all else fails, the Darkness is not above forcing mortals to obey its will. In any place where the Darkness' power is strong, the Darkness can, once per day, attempt to force that individual to accept a Shadow Point. This is usually accompanied by torture or threats, distributed by the likes of Goju Adorai and his minions. There is no resist

THE DARKNESS SUBTYPE

All creatures with at least one Shadow Point are considered to have the Darkness subtype. This is described as follows:

Darkness — Creatures that have this subtype have either been corrupted by or are actually extensions of the Lying Darkness. The Darkness itself is an entity of godlike power. Unless otherwise specified, the damage resistance of such creatures can always be overcome by crystal weapons.

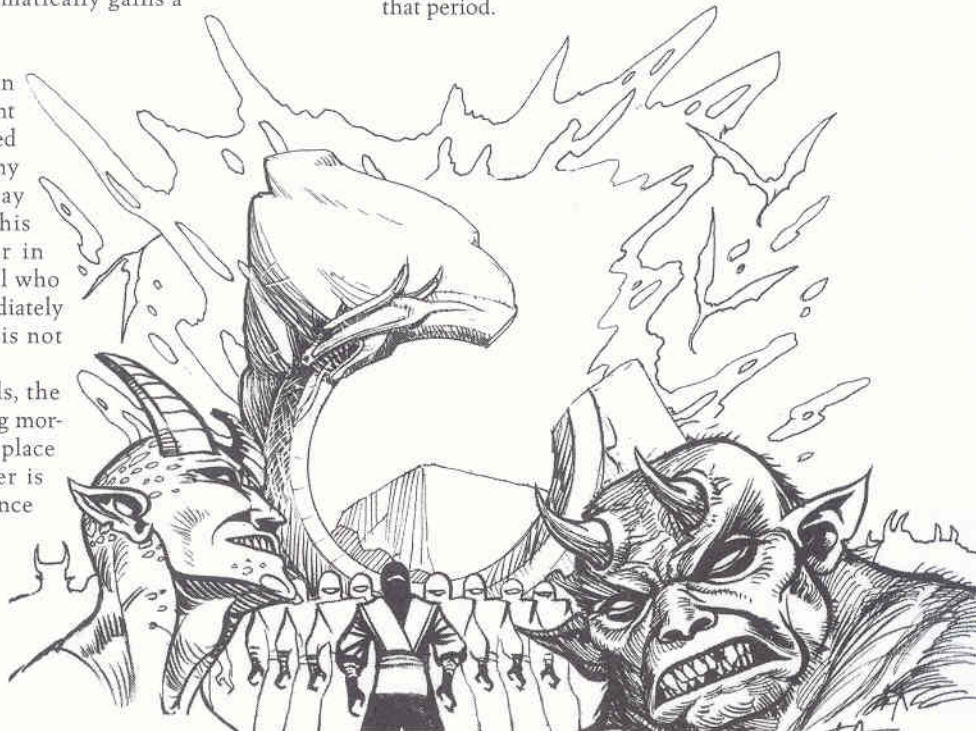
Creatures with the Darkness subtype described in *Creatures of Rokugan* have minimum Shadow Points as follows. All Shadow Points are cumulative (thus a Darkness Spawn in the Shadow Walker prestige class would gain Shadow Points from both):

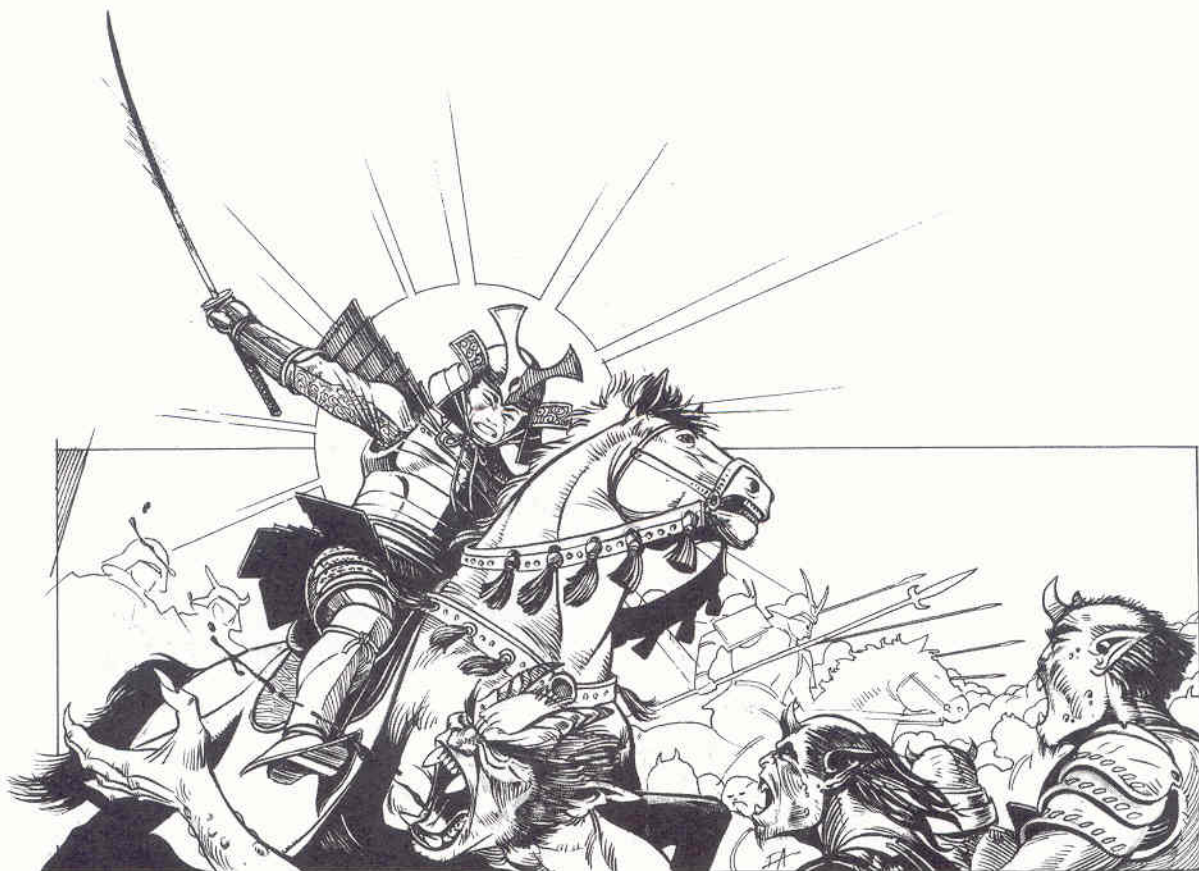
Ninja Shapeshifter — 4
Shadow Beast — 4
Darkness Spawn — +2
Shadow Walker prestige class — One Point per class level

attempt here; the Shadow Point is only gained if the Darkness' target succumbs to its torture, threats, or manipulation and willingly accepts the Shadow Point. It was in this manner, combined with Proximity to Darkness, that Emperor Toturi was slowly corrupted over the course of two years.

POWERS OF DARKNESS

The following abilities are available to all characters who meet the listed requirements. These abilities are all kata, though they are treated as magic for the purposes of any effect which hampers or cancels magic. (In the d20 system, all are considered supernatural abilities.) Note that the versions of these abilities in *Way of the Ninja* have slightly stricter prerequisites, due to the greatly reduced power of the Darkness in that period.





SHADOW LEAP

Preparation Time: 10

Duration: 120 minutes

This kata greatly increases your speed and agility while in areas of darkness. Unfortunately, you are greatly hampered by areas of bright sunlight.

Requirements: 1+ Shadow Points.

XP Cost: 30

Effect: You gain +10 speed and a +4 enhancement bonus on all Jump, Climb, Balance, and Tumble checks. While in areas of bright sunlight, the effects of this kata are canceled. In addition, your movement is halved, you cannot run or charge, and you suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls, saves, and checks.

School Rank: 1+ Shadow Points.

Cost: 2

Effect: Your movement is increased as if your Water were two higher for the duration of this kata, and you roll and keep two additional dice on all Athletics and Climbing checks. In areas of bright sunlight, these effects are canceled. In addition, your movement is halved, you cannot run, and you roll one less die for all actions.

SHADOW WAVE

Preparation Time: 10

Duration: 120 minutes

At any time during the duration of this kata, you may activate its effects. It causes a cloud of darkness and shadow to roil around you in a thirty foot radius, hampering all vision but your own. The kata may only be activated once per preparation.

Requirements: 3+ Shadow Points.

XP Cost: 500

Effect: All others within the cloud are blinded except for yourselves and any who know this kata. The cloud lasts for five rounds.

School Rank: 3+ Shadow Points.

Cost: 3

Effect: All others within the cloud are blinded (+15 to all TNs relying upon vision) except for yourself and any others who know this kata. The cloud lasts for five rounds.

SHADOW SEDUCTION

Preparation Time: 10

Duration: 120 minutes

When prepared, you must select a specific target for this kata, and perform an act of murder or worse at their behest. Note that the Shadow Dragon need not have personally performed a sinister act to utilize this kata, so long as one of his Goju minions performed it in his name.

Requirements: Base attack bonus +15 or higher, 5+ Shadow Points.

XP Cost: 1000

Effect: The target must make a Will save vs. DC 15 + your Charisma modifier or immediately become Goju.

School Rank: 5+ Shadow Points.

Cost: 4

Effect: The target must make an opposed Willpower roll against you or gain one Shadow Point and become a member of the Goju family.

SHADOW CONSUMPTION

Preparation Time: 30

Duration: Special

You draw a willing target deeper into shadow, increasing their control of the power of Nothing. The subject must be present with you for the duration of the preparation time.

Requirements: Base attack bonus 15+, must have Darkness Spawn template.

XP Cost: 3000

Effect: If the subject is already a Goju, he either adopts the Darkness Spawn template or his race is changed to Ninja Shapeshifter, your choice. (See *Creatures of Rokugan* for details.)

School Rank: Insight Rank 6, with at least 5 ranks of Goju Ninja, 6+ Shadow Points.

Cost: 7

Effect: If the subject has at least one Shadow Point, their Shadow Points are increased by one or two (your choice), permanently.

DARKNESS SPAWN

The most fearsome enemies during this period (though most do not recognize them for what they are) are the Darkness Spawn. These souls have been completely dominated by the Lying Darkness and suffused with its power.

DARKNESS SPAWN (DARKNESS)

Creating Darkness Spawn

"Darkness Spawn" is a template that can be added to any corporeal creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). Though the Darkness generally prefers to corrupt humans and humanoids, it is not rare for it to spread its influence to animals, plants, and even pieces of terrain.

A darkness spawn uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Special Attacks: A darkness spawn retains all non-magical special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following

Shadow Bolt (Su): Once per day, a darkness spawn may fire the essence of the Darkness in a concentrated bolt, dealing 5d6 points of damage. The user also suffers the loss of Void Use and Ancestor feats, and suffers a 10% spell failure chance (in addition to any existing spell failure chance) to all divine spells for an hour. A successful Reflex save (DC 18) indicates the target takes only half damage and suffers no further effects. A character killed by the shadow bolt is unmade completely, and may not be raised from the dead by any means save *resurrection*, *wish*, *miracle*, or divine intervention.

Severed Tie: The darkness spawn may cause the corruption of the Lying Darkness to break the bond between a living human and his ancestor spirit for a short time. As a normal action, the creature may cause all characters within twenty feet to lose the benefits of any Ancestor Feats they possess for a number of rounds equal to the creature's hit dice. This may be done once per day.

Spell-like Abilities: The darkness spawn may cast any of the following spells once per day as a 10th level sorcerer (DC 10 + spell level + Charisma modifier) — *blur*, *change self*, *displacement*, *hypnotic pattern*, *invisibility* (self only), *minor image*, *mirror image*, *misdirection*, *silent image*, *ventriloquism*.

Special Qualities: A darkness spawn retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains the following qualities:

Darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Damage reduction 20/+2 (crystal)

SR equal to the creature's HD (Max 50)

Loses all Ancestor and Void Use feats.

May not cast spells except those gained by this template.

Saves: Same as the base creature

Abilities: Same as the base creature, with +2 Str and +2 Dex

Skills: Same as the base creature, with +4 to Hide and Move

Silently checks

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Same as the base creature

Challenge Rating: As base creature +2

Treasure: Same as the base creature

Honor: Usually 0

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement: Same as the base creature

SAMPLE DARKNESS SPAWN

This example uses a 5th level human ninja as the base creature.

Medium-Size Humanoid; Hit Dice 5d6+10 (25 hp); Initiative: +9 (+3 Dex, +2 Int, +4 Improved Initiative); Speed: 30 ft.; AC +3(Dex); Attacks: +7 katana; Damage: 1d10+1 katana; Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Sneak attack, Shadow bolt

Special Qualities: Spell-like abilities, damage resistance 20/+2 (crystal), Spell resistance 5,

Saves: Fort +3 Ref +7 Will +3

Abilities: Str 12 Dex 17 Con 14 Int 14 Wis 14 Cha 8

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +9, Escape Artist +11, Hide +15, Move Silently +15, Search +10, Spot +10, Tumble +11

Feats: Improved Initiative, Mobility

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: Standard

Honor: 0

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: By character class

Sneak Attack +3d6

Ninja Dodge +2

Poison Use

Darkvision 60 ft.

Shadow Bolt (Su): Once per day, a darkness spawn may fire the essence of the Darkness in a concentrated bolt, dealing 5d6 points of damage. The user also suffers the loss of Void Use and Ancestor feats, and suffers a 10% spell failure chance (in addition to any existing spell failure chance) to all divine spells for an hour. A successful Reflex save (DC 18) indicates the target takes only half damage and suffers no further effects. A character killed by the shadow bolt is unmade completely, and may not be raised from the dead by any means save *resurrection*, *wish*, *miracle*, or divine intervention.

Severed Tie: The darkness spawn may cause the corruption of the Lying Darkness to break the bond between a living human and his ancestor spirit for a short time. As a normal action, the creature may cause all characters within twenty feet to lose the benefits of any Ancestor Feats they possess for a number of rounds equal to the creature's hit dice. This may be done once per day.

Spell-like Abilities: The darkness spawn may cast any of the following spells once per day as a 10th level sorcerer (DC 10 +

spell level + Charisma modifier) — *blur, change self, displacement, hypnotic pattern, invisibility (self only), minor image, mirror image, misdirection, silent image, ventriloquism.*

Darkness Spawn

Any living creature who completely succumbs to the Lying Darkness can become a Darkness Spawn. These creatures usually have most if not all of the powers of darkness described in the GM's Guide. Such creatures lose all Ancestors and all abilities or techniques that rely upon spending Void Points. Shugenja lose the ability to cast spells. In addition, they also possess the following abilities.

Severed Tie: The darkness spawn may break the bond between a living human and his ancestor spirit for a short time. As a normal action, the creature may cause all characters within twenty feet to lose the benefits of any Ancestors they possess for a number of rounds equal to the creature's Shadow Points. This may be done once per day

- Ability to see clearly in total darkness.
- +1 to all physical Traits (Strength, Stamina, Reflexes, Agility)
- Two Free Raises on all Stealth rolls.

THE AGASHA MAIDEN

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

While traveling through Phoenix lands, the party meets a young maiden of the Agasha house. A former Dragon, she fled to join the Phoenix along with many other members of her family after Hitomi began to slaughter all monks who bore the Togashi name. Though she has obviously found a warm welcome among the Phoenix Clan, she seems depressed. She approaches any player character who shows her kindness (assuming that individual is not a Dragon), begging that they perform a small favor for her. Less altruistic characters may wish to consider that this maiden is a cousin of Agasha Gennai, the newly appointed Master of Air. Aiding her would be a clever political move, gaining an ally close to the Elemental Council of the Phoenix Clan.

FOCUS

As it turns out, the maiden's father remains in the lands of the Dragon Clan. Not believing the rumors of Hitomi's madness, the old man refused to be budged even as the rest of his family moved away. The Agasha maiden wishes to make one last impassioned plea to her father to leave the Dragon Clan. While it is too dangerous for her to return to her home, considering Hitomi's mercilessness toward traitors, she has written a letter to her father and requests that the player characters deliver it for her. The village where she dwelled is far from the High House of Light, so it is unlikely that the player characters will encounter any of Hitomi's enforcers. Even if they did, surely Hitomi would not punish a samurai for merely delivering a message beyond escorting them back beyond the borders of Dragon lands. The girl makes a risky request, but she fears that her father will perish if Hitomi continues her path of madness.

STRIKE

Naturally the trip is not as simple as the maiden makes it out to be. With so few Phoenix samurai left and the Dragon largely aloof to matters beyond their castles, the roads between Phoenix and Dragon lands are wild and lawless. When the party arrives at the Agasha village, they discover the old man is surprisingly eager to hear news of his daughter. He accepts her letter gladly and seems greatly relieved to hear that she is doing well in Phoenix lands. Then he makes his own request — that the player characters help him escape to join his daughter. Obviously this task is much more difficult than delivering a simple letter. While the Togashi were given permission to leave, the Agasha abandoned their clan without Hitomi's permission. If Hitomi's enforcers catch the player characters smuggling another Agasha refugee over their borders, they will not be pleased. To make matters worse, the feeble old man is incapable of traveling quickly. If they player characters do decide to help him, they face a long journey with danger at every turn.

LOST HISTORIES

ADVENTURE HOOK

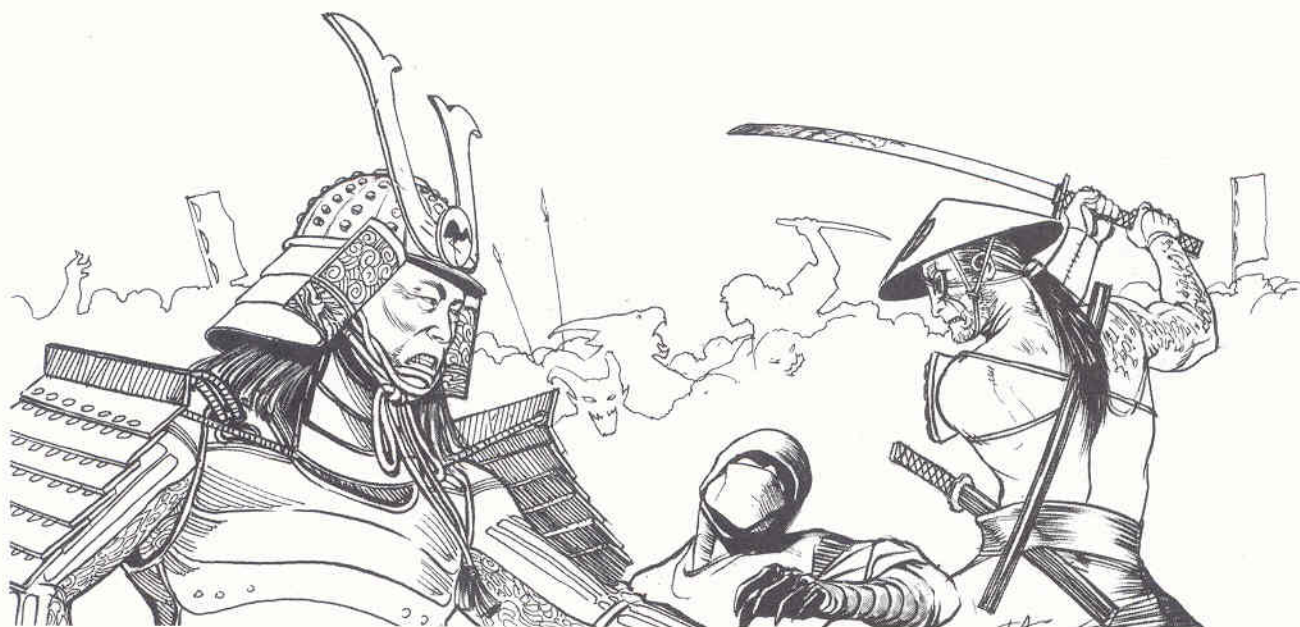
CHALLENGE

The player characters are summoned to the Imperial City by one of their superiors. He reveals to them that in recent months many of the Empire's most important historical records have been systematically destroyed. Naturally the Lying Darkness is responsible. This is not known at this time, though if the player characters have already encountered the Darkness' machinations they may suspect the truth. During the recent fires in the Ikoma Libraries, apparently one chamber was untouched. The scrolls that were stored there are now being prepared for transport to Otosan Uchi. The player characters must guard the caravan that carries these scrolls on its way to Otosan Uchi for safe keeping.

FOCUS

In difficult times such as these, the journey from Otosan Uchi to Kyuden Ikoma should be an adventure in and of itself. Though the Lion are doing their best to maintain order on the roads, Rokugan is a lawless place. Skirmishes between Lion samurai and Unicorn magistrates are also common, and may involve the characters if they do not move quickly toward their goal. Upon reaching Kyuden Ikoma, the historians are somewhat reluctant to hand over the scrolls. It has been their duty to guard these histories for generations, and the fact that they failed in this duty does not sit well with them. Handing over this cache of scrolls is essentially their last admission of defeat.

The historians insist on dispatching one of their number, a young Ikoma by the name of Sume, to accompany the caravan. If the player characters attempt to deny the Ikoma their right to send one of their own, the Ikoma refuse to surrender the scrolls. While they realize the danger the histories face, the Ikoma truly believe that none can guard the histories as well as one of their own. Without a direct order from the Emperor, they refuse to surrender their duty entirely.



Sume is a polite samurai, if extremely assured in his own abilities. He politely rebuffs any attempts by the characters to examine the scrolls. This, he insists, is not their duty. It is their role to protect the scrolls, and reading such aged and delicate documents unnecessarily only accelerates their decay.

Before the player characters leave on their journey, a band of Kitsu shugenja arrives to offer them a gift. They present a crystal tanto for each of the player characters, engraved with the mon of that character's family.

STRIKE

Shortly after the journey, Sume begins to show signs of poor health. He stops at every way station, lingering as long as possible until he feels fit to travel once more. He drinks heavily, occasionally letting slip details of the mission. While his actions may seem irresponsible, more perceptive characters may note that Sume's behavior does not seem entirely genuine. Any character that disobeys Sume's request and examines the history scrolls finds that they are not history scrolls at all, but agricultural documents detailing the mundane histories of farms throughout the Lion Clan.

In truth, very few of the scrolls in the Ikoma Histories survived the fire, and the Ikoma would not foolishly risk the remnants in a caravan not heavily protected by Lion samurai. The caravan and the scrolls are bait, in hopes of drawing minions of the Lying Darkness to attack the player characters. Sume, like the player characters, carries a crystal dagger and is prepared for any ambush. He intends to capture a Darkness Spawn alive, if possible, and learn as much as he can about his family's newest enemy.

It is a daring gambit, but Sume reasons that the most he has to lose is his life, and the lives of a few random samurai.

VILLAGE OF MASKS

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

This adventure hook works best if the player characters already know about the Lying Darkness, have encountered its minions, and are counted as an enemy by Goju Adorai and his ilk. In their travels through the wild lands of Rokugan (perhaps while pursuing another Adventure Hook) the player characters come upon a small ronin village. It seems a hospitable enough place, a welcome pause in their tireless journeys. The inhabitants seem somewhat surprised to see a band of samurai, but welcome them with cautious hospitality.

FOCUS

In the dead of night, the minions of Darkness strike. Adorai has tired of the characters' interference and has sent a band of ninja larger than the party can safely handle. Just as things seem darkest, the innkeeper and several of the other villagers appear and help fight off Adorai's minions with crystal swords. The fight resolves itself quickly.

STRIKE

The villagers are not ronin at all, but Shosuro actors who remained behind at their Champion's request when the Scorpion began their exile. All of those who dwell here have had some experience with the Lying Darkness and know how to fight it. Every man, woman, and child in this technically violates the Imperial Edict by remaining within the Empire, a fate punishable by death. Yet the fact remains that these men and women risked their own lives to help the player characters defeat an impossible foe. Will the player characters cleave to their duty and punish the Scorpion for their actions — and if they do so, will the Scorpion let them? If the player characters choose to honor their saviors they might learn much about their strange enemy, but could be considered complicit in their crimes if the truth is ever discovered.

IMPORTANT NPCS

SHOSURO, THE FIRST SCORPION THUNDER

One thousand years of imprisonment have not driven Shosuro mad. The corruption of her soul by the Lying Darkness did not turn her into the seething shadow of hatred that she has become. There were two promises, one each from two Kami, that Shosuro rested all of her hopes upon, and they have both been broken. One thousand years to contemplate that even the Children of Sun and Moon were nothing more than liars and opportunists... that is what has caused unending darkness to consume her soul.

When Shosuro was small, she felt she had no place in the world around her. She did not know her origins, and she did not know why she could alter her form with a thought. When the Kami fell from the sky, it was not long before she was drawn to the dashing and dark Bayushi — the Kami whose wit, air of menace, and inscrutable nature so closely mirrored her own soul. The two become close friends, and Shosuro knew that the child of the Sun Goddess would surely be able to give her the answers she sought — who was she? Bayushi's Daughter, as she came to be called, would be disappointed in her quest at every turn. When Shinsei came to gather the Thunders to face Fu Leng, Bayushi forbade her to go, shocking Shosuro. Where any other woman may have been flattered by the passion with which Bayushi clung to her, Shosuro was ... disappointed by the Kami's lack of vision. Even should she die, the end of her tormented life was more than a fair price for the salvation of an Empire.

When she and the other Thunders faced the Fallen Kami, she would again find disappointment by escaping with her life and the burden of Isawa's twelve scrolls. Instead of finding a death that would give worth, meaning, and definition to her life, she instead found herself forced to live or allow thousands to suffer. As she and Shinsei made their way back to the fledgling Empire, it became clear that they would never survive. Though Fu Leng had been defeated, his armies hunted the last Thunder and the Little Teacher — it was only a matter of time before the First Oni would avenge its master's fall.

It was then that Shosuro heard the whisper of the Darkness in her mind. It called to her, and spoke to her as if they had always known each other. It promised so many things — escape, hope... and answers. The Darkness had the knowledge Shosuro had sought, and it could guarantee the Thunder a safe return to her Empire if only it could draw upon her soul for strength. Though Shosuro saw no choice but to ensure the safety of the Empire, it was the Darkness' promise of knowledge that caused the Scorpion Thunder to embrace the touch of the Darkness perhaps a little more willingly than she would have otherwise.

The small sliver of hope she gained was not completely crushed; Shinsei and Shosuro returned to Rokugan with the Black Scrolls. But when the Darkness spoke to her of her true self, she cursed herself for a fool and found herself once again faced with disappointment. She and it were the same, it claimed, formed from the primal Nothing that existed without form and without a name. Though Shosuro thought she had been lied to at first, eventually she accepted the truth. She was a child of the Nothing, and that Nothing was slowly turning her back into the formlessness from which she came. She knew if the soul of a Thunder could be completely devoured by the Darkness, it would grow from a weak force into something much more powerful... and sinister.



In desperation, she fled to the mountains that the Kami Togashi had made his home. She knew Bayushi would have no answers for her, but perhaps the First Dragon carried some hidden wisdom, some unknown power, that could be her salvation. Togashi could not offer her a cure for what she had become, but showed her a way that the Darkness could be denied its prize. The Dragon Kami entombed Shosuro in a prison far below his castle and promised her that there would come a day that her soul would be pure again, and she would be reunited with Bayushi forever.

One thousand years passed, and all that remains of Shosuro echoes as a thousand disappointments, and two broken promises. Bayushi never came. Togashi died years ago, and Shosuro's body and soul yet remains corrupted. Where once she fought the touch of the Darkness, she has come to understand that once again it offered her the truth when others lied. Now freed by the mistakes of Hitomi, Shosuro intends to make sure that the Darkness allows such mercy throughout the Empire she once saved.

SHOSURO, SCORPION THUNDER

Female human Scorpion (Ninja 10/Shadow-Walker 10): CR 20; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 10d6 +10 plus 10d8 +10; hp 137; Init +15; Spd 40 ft.; AC 26 (touch 17, flat-footed 26); Atk +5 keen ninja-to +28/+23/+18/+13 melee (1d6+5 damage); SQ Class skill - Poison (family bonus), Ninja Dodge (+3), Sneak Attack +5d6, Poison Use, Speed of Darkness, Shadow Run, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, flanking); Honor: 0; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +21, Will +8; Str 17, Dex 25, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 6, Cha 19; Height 5 ft. 4 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Balance +30, Bluff +27, Climb +26, Disguise +27, Hide +30, Jump +26, Listen +21, Move Silently +30, Tumble +30; Bayushi's Technique, Blind-Fight, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Pincers and Tail, Strike at the Tail, Stunning Blade, The Pincers Hold The Tail Strikes, Way of the Scorpion.

Dojo: None.

Possessions: +5 keen ninja-to, kote of armor +5, cloak of stealth (as cloak of elvenkind), boots of stealth (as boots of elvenkind), amulet of natural armor +4, ring of mind shielding, Shosuro's Rainbow Cloak

SHOSURO, SCORPION THUNDER

Earth: 4

Stamina: 6

Water: 6

Perception: 8

Fire: 6

Agility: 9

Air: 7

Reflexes: 9

Void: 2

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 5, Bayushi Bushi 3

Dojo: None

Honor: 0.0

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Magic Resistance (2 ranks), Quick

Disadvantages: Lost Love

Skills: Athletics 7, Blowgun 5, Climbing 8, Climbing Tools 6, Defense 9, Explosives 5, Hand-to-Hand 7, History: Scorpion Clan 5, Intimidation 5, Investigation 5, Kyujutsu 8, Lore: Lying Darkness 9, Ninja-to 9, Poison 7, Seduction 6, Shintao 4, Sincerity 7, Stealth 9.

Kata: None.

PURUSHA, VENGEFUL ABOMINATION

There are many human concepts that the Naga have no words for, and the Abomination known as Purusha has come to learn many of them. Naga need no such words for feelings and concepts borne in the mind when the Akasha can communicate such things without a breath. Barely connected to the Akasha, Purusha has not heard the comforting voice of the Naga group mind in years. Naga need no words for duty, loyalty, despair, or sorrow, but the young Abomination has come to understand just how insufficient such words can be.

Two years ago, when the human Empire lost its leader, the Clan of the Scorpion was banished far beyond the lands of Rokugan. The Naga were saddened by the loss of The Toturi, for he led with wisdom and nobility that had helped their race develop an understanding with the humans. In the face of such a tragedy, the Akasha was confused when it learned that those being held responsible — the Scorpion — were not being killed. The Qamar, as a show of their devotion to the alliance between his people and Rokugan, ordered a force of Naga that would ensure that none of the untrustworthy humans slipped away as they marched into the Sands.

With many Naga warriors preparing to venture into the Shadowlands with their Crab allies, it fell to the Purusha and his scouts to perform this duty. The Purusha was an accomplished member of his caste and rivaled even the Isha stalkers in stealth. What the young Naga scout found in his mission did not surprise him — there were indeed those among the Scorpion who attempted to sneak back into Rokugan for some unknown purpose. Such an attempt was not made until the humans had left the Empire, and the Naga would be foolish to follow them deeper. Should a Naga cross the cursed Burning Sands, something there turned them into tortured Abominations that were almost completely cut off from the Akasha. As the Purusha learned the depth of the Scorpion's planned treachery, however, he felt that he could not sit by and watch The Toturi's killers escape their exile and return in force. He commanded his followers to return to the Shinomen Forest, and quickly made his way deeper into the Burning Sands to warn the guardian, The Gohei, of what he had learned from the Scorpions he had killed.

Sadly, the Purusha did not reach the humans in time. The change began to overcome him, and he fled back towards the human Empire as quickly as he could. In a matter of hours, however, a deep slumber overcame him, and he fell just outside the mountains that would have led him home. When he awoke, the Purusha was relieved to find that he had not undergone a horrible physical or mental change... until he stood on two human-shaped legs. He reached out to the Akasha with his mind, but only heard a faint whisper in reply, begging him not to return. Faced with an exile not unlike the one that the Scorpion would endure, the Purusha chose to die at the hands of his kin rather than wander back into the Sands and truly be lost.

When the young scout returned to the Shinomen, he was shocked by what he had found. The Naga had removed themselves from their alliance with the Crab and left them to die. They marched now upon the lands of the Dragon Clan, seeking some ancient power of the Foul that had taken root there. The forest was nearly empty, and had become an easy target for bandits. Losing all concern for his own situation, the Purusha began to hunt down and kill the thieves, one by one. As he was no longer entirely Naga, those that escaped his wrath returned to Rokugan with reports of a powerful demon

or some sort of guardian spirit sent by the Naga to punish any intruders. For now, the Purusha remains in the forest, staying away from his former kin and destroying any who would threaten the Naga's borders. When the Naga's war is done, he has been promised by the rapidly-fading voice of the Akasha, his brothers and sisters will grant him the final mercy of death and rebirth. Until that time, however, he defends the lands of his people without a trace of mercy.

PURUSHA, NAGA ABOMINATION

Male Naga (Rog 6): CR 6; Medium-size humanoid (Naga); HD 6d6 + 48; hp 72; Init +6; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18 (touch 16, flat-footed 18); Atk +2 yumi +14 ranged (1d6 damage); SQ Bloodline Abilities (Spit Venom, Immunities), Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, flanking), Sneak Attack +3d6; Honor: nil; AL N; SV Fort +11, Ref +14, Will +6; Str 21, Dex 22, Con 27, Int 13, Wis 9, Cha 5; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Naga), Balance +15, Climb +14, Escape Artist +15, Hide +15, Intimidate +6, Intuit Direction +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +15, Spot +8; Dodge, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot.

Dojo: None; **Kata:** None

Possessions: +2 yumi, +2 dagger, amulet of natural armor +2

PURUSHA, NAGA ABOMINATION

Earth: 3

Willpower: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 4

Fire: 4

Air: 2

Reflexes: 4

Akasha: 3

School/Rank: Scout 2

Dojo: None

Honor: Nil

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Inner Gift: Animal Speech

Disadvantages: Abomination

Skills: Conceal 3, Hunting 5, History: Rokugan 3, Moksha 4, Spear 3, Stealth 6, Yomanri 5

Kata: None.

CULT OF THE DESTROYER ACT 5: KNOW THE EVIL

"To be reborn, first we must die, and we all live waiting for the next life. To live, then, is simply waiting for death."

— Kural Rafiq, of the Cult of the Destroyer

This Act presumes that the characters have become an 'ally' of Feydn Rafiq before this, most probably in Act 2.

BACKGROUND

Know the Evil concerns the players with the fallout of a Phoenix daimyo's spiritual crisis. Though Agasha Toruma is new to the Phoenix clan (as are all the Agasha), he is the

daimyo of Mihari province (Ag2 in the *Secrets of the Phoenix* inside back cover; it covers two-thirds of the plains west of Treacherous Pass). He is also a philosopher, and finds the concept of rebirth, and the treatises on the concept, fascinating. As Phoenix daimyo, he began to seek out other shugenja to join the Phoenix. These two interests made him vulnerable to the machinations of House Rafiq, who have sent an agent in the guise of a new recruit to corrupt Toruma.

Toruma, for his part, knew that his new recruit was gaijin, and kept him hidden from his superiors. Reasoning that the Phoenix would ultimately benefit from his powerful foreign magic, he tutored the young man in the ways of Rokugan, the kami, and the Phoenix. This man, Kural Rafiq, was a devious as they come. So, as Toruma attempted to win Kural over, Kural turned the tables and indoctrinated him in turn in the ways of the Cult of the Destroyer.

Like the Phoenix, the Cult's central figure (Shiva) represents rebirth. Whereas Shiba radiates compassion, Shiva represents the opposite. It focuses on death and destruction, with a small allowance for rebirth. Toruma has assimilated both, and now falsely believes that Shiba and Shiva are the same being, and that the Cult of the Destroyer is the most modern and accurate way to revere his new clan's founder.

As *Know the Evil* opens, Toruma is fully integrated into the Cult of the Destroyer, and aware of the plot to destroy the Seppun. He gives support to the Cult, and has even provided the use of a small island off the Phoenix coast for them to use as a base.

SYNOPSIS

Feydn contacts the PCs, and sends them to Mihari knowing that the daimyo is a Cultist. The characters proceed to Mihari and confront the Mantis occupiers and eventually Toruma himself. Toruma becomes defensive when confronted, claims that he does what's best for Rokugan, and even attacks the characters to preserve the secret of the Cult. The finale of the act involves tracking down Kural Rafiq to the offshore headquarters of the Cult in Rokugan. This leads directly into Act 6.

NOTABLE NPCs IN ACT 5

GM Note: Only levels and ranks are given here for the two primary characters. This allows you to customize the characters to suit your group. Feel free to alter their level to make combat with them more challenging and satisfying if need be.

Agasha Toruma [Shugenja 9; *Agasha Shugenja* 3]

Agasha Toruma was a well-meaning samurai, once. He was a loyal, faithful, high-ranked Dragon until the Agasha defection, and then he began losing faith. He tried to embrace the Phoenix as his own people, but failed. For him, the first breach of loyalty was a fatal one and his honor could never be recovered. He has come to hate Agasha Gennai for the defection, the Dragon clan for forcing Gennai's hand, and has become disillusioned with Rokugan as a whole. Only esoteric intellectual pursuits interest him now.

When Kural approached, Toruma saw in the gaijin the faint flicker of a hope to reignite his faith. Kural said he wanted to join the Phoenix, and Toruma set to that with zeal. Zeal, on the other hand, does not protect anyone from manipulation, and Kural's pointed philosophical "theorizing" spurred Toruma to ques-

tion a great many things, until he was ready to embrace the Cult's ways whole-heartedly.

Role-playing notes: Toruma is a very tired man; weary of, yet resigned to, strife and conflict. He is far older, mentally, than he has any right to be. He is frequently impatient and has no use for pleasantries.

Mechanical notes: Toruma is well-equipped, as a provincial daimyo should be. However, his spell selection tends towards the utilitarian rather than the combat.

Kural Rafiq [Shugenja 2/Sorcerer 6/Fighter 2; Rafiq Warrior (treat as Akodo Bushi) 1/Agasha Shugenja 2]

Kural Rafiq is Feydn Rafiq's nephew, but the two have barely interacted in years. In fact, Kural does not even know his uncle is in Rokugan, let alone that he is working against the Cult of the Destroyer. Kural has spent the last year and a half in Rokugan, under the "tutelage" of Agasha Toruma. He is clever and resourceful, able to take advantage of Toruma's weariness. To Toruma's credit, Kural has learned how to be a shugenja: to speak to the kami and have them respond to his calls.

Kural also has brilliant manipulation skills easily on par with a Bayushi, and he has no morals or honor code to get in his way. He is a good actor, liar, and he is incredibly familiar with Rokugani culture and language. If it were not for his face, he could "go native." He has no personal stake in the plot against the Seppun, but he is doing it anyway. If there were someone he trusted completely, and they asked him, he would say he does it because he simply enjoys it.

Role-playing notes: Kural is a highly skilled actor, and can act however he needs to in order to get what he wants. He is not trustworthy, however, and will betray anyone he to protect himself, or to accomplish his mission (prioritized in that order).

Mechanical notes: Though trained as an infiltrator and for subterfuge, he still fights excellently. His spells and equipment should reflect that he is a formidable challenge.

SCENE ONE: WARMING FIRE

This can be placed anywhere, as Feydn Rafiq can contact the characters almost wherever they are, approaching them in secret so as to not draw attention to himself or the PCs. He extends an invitation to meet him in the nearest secluded area after dark. When the PCs arrive, read the following:

You arrive at the meeting place that Feydn Rafiq invited you to, just after sundown as requested. He is there, sitting in front of a small fire. As you approach, he stands and does a strange bow, repeatedly. "Namaskar, my friends, greetings!" He motions for you to sit, and then he returns to a seated position as well. "It is good to see you again, though I have terrible news. The very same cult that we spoke of when we last met has proven to be more dangerous than I had ever suspected, and indeed their insignia is that which you discovered on an assassin's blade. I find myself needing assistance in combating them once again, so I turn to you. I know you are capable of handling yourselves with skill, and you will need all you have for this mission. The Cult has stolen a member of your Phoenix Clan, a local lord by the name of Agasha Toruma. He commands an entire province near Seppun lands, and he must be stopped! He is supplying the Cult with power and influence, and if he can be displaced then we can begin to strike against the Cult at their heart!"

Feydn treats the characters as close friends and allies, answering any questions they have with a jovial smile. If the PCs ask him where he found this out, he credits "his sources." If pressed further, he reminds them that though his interests and Rokugan's coincide perfectly, he is still not permitted to be there by Imperial edict. Thus, for their safety he will not reveal them — just as he will not reveal the fact that the PCs are helping him. He claims he simply wants to eliminate the Cult and return home.

If the characters are hesitant, he will remind them of their oaths to the Empire and that any threat to the Empire is a threat to them. If a Phoenix, especially an Agasha, is in the party, he will focus on that character and encourage him to cleanse their clan or family name quietly.



If the characters ask why Feydn can't stop Toruma himself, read the following:

"Ah, I am but a humble warrior. I cannot stand against him, he is a shugenja. Besides, even if I could kill him it would only create more trouble. Involvement of gaijin like me would only raise more questions, cause more chaos. Better to have you deal with him, because we do not wish to disturb your society. Your Empire has enough troubles now, no?"

Once the characters agree to help him, read the following:

Rafiq's face widens into a grin. "Ah, excellent! This is the glory of working towards the same purpose," he says. Then he stands and bows again, in his strange, involved gaijin style. "I will see you after you take care of our problem, then." After that, he walks off into the night.

Presumably, the characters head to Mihari province and directly to Scene Two.

SCENE TWO: BURNING FIRE

Toruma's 'court' is a small one, consisting of a large (but mostly empty) estate. Perhaps thirty Phoenix samurai (courtiers, and all Phoenix are prohibited from carrying their katana) are present, with twice that number in Mantis bushi guarding both the Phoenix and their estate. Toruma governs according to the same principles as the Phoenix daimyo, but he does so under a Mantis rule.

When the characters approach, the Mantis guards harass the PCs. Unless one or more of the characters is a Mantis samurai, the guards will 'suggest' that they should look into solving their problem with the Mantis governor at the base camp a day's ride north. Most likely, the characters will persist and ask to speak with Toruma-sama, though this will draw the ire of the Mantis guards unless handled diplomatically.

The GM is highly encouraged to play up the tension between the Mantis and Phoenix forces present with any means he feels are appropriate. Perhaps a Mantis takes offense to a Phoenix PC's lack of humility. The Mantis are conquerors and have an interest in maintaining the relative peace of their occupation, but they are also samurai and take offense easily from those they view as their inferiors (in this case, the occupied Phoenix). A duel of honor would serve well to highlight the fact that the Phoenix lands are occupied at the moment.

If the characters manage to appease the Mantis guards, bypass them, or (not a good idea for the PC in question's longevity) kill them, they find Toruma and Kural in the study, reading a scroll. Read the following:

When you enter Toruma's study, you see a small man hunched over a desk, reading a scroll. He is clothed in the manner you would expect from a Phoenix daimyo, and you can't help but wonder, could this really be the man responsible for helping the Cult of the Destroyer wreak so much havoc?

In the corner, you notice a powerfully-built gaijin man sitting in the corner, in a half-lotus position, appearing to meditate. Toruma looks up at you and asks in a weary voice, "Do you have business here?"

If the PCs try to talk about something else, he is capable of carrying on a conversation about recent events quite capably. In his function as provincial daimyo, he is aware of many things, though he does not extend the PCs any trust, especially if any PC is from the Mantis Clan.

If the PCs ask about the gaijin in the corner, Kural opens his eyes and cheerfully introduces himself. His accent is thin, and he puts forth an affable demeanor. He will not contradict his cover story of being a student of Toruma, but will disclose this information, unaware that it will simply confirm to the PCs that Toruma is a Cultist.

If the PCs confront Toruma directly, he becomes less coherent and far more enraged. Read the following:

"How dare you suggest that I am a traitor? I am a daimyo, samurai. You have no right to question me." Toruma snarls and says "I do what is best for Rokugan, and in these dark times we need real allies. You would presume to judge me for saving my family and my clan with an alliance? No, I think it would be better, far better, if you were simply never heard from again." Kural stands up and relaxes his body into what is obviously a fighting stance as well.

With that, Toruma attacks the PCs, beginning the fight with a Fire spell to attack them. Kural will likewise attack with magic, though he will only use Rokugani magic until the fight goes poorly. Unless the characters attempt to make extra noise, the fighting does not draw the attention of other inhabitants of the estate (it is large and sparsely populated, and Toruma prefers his privacy anyway).

After combat, the PCs will likely want to look around. Fortunately for them, Toruma was examining Cult documents when they arrived, so they are readily accessible.

Membership lists are present, including Toruma, Utawa, and Hirofumi, so the PCs can present them to the Seppun to hunt down the Cult members. The list is extensive, with over three dozen Rokugani members of the Cult active. However, far more disturbing is the map of the coastline, which shows a base for the Cult of the Destroyer. This is their hub; Feydn was correct.

SCENE THREE: FALLOUT

From here, the PCs can do what they wish. Proceeding to Act 6, they will likely wish to enlist aid for an attack on the Cult's island temple. Act 6 describes this attack in detail, though if the PCs wish to hunt down individual Rokugani cultists, the GM is encouraged to allow this to happen. Cultists are all one of two sorts of individuals: skilled killers, or influential people. While Toruma was the most influential member of the Cult, other powerful men and women exist in the Cult.

When the characters are ready to attack the island, proceed to Act 6.

CHAPTER SIX:

SOUL OF THE EMPIRE

On the hills overlooking Volturum, Saigorei looked down with a wary eye. The armies of the enemy seethed around the ruined city. The shugenja had called the enemy "the Darkness," which was apparently something separate from the Shadowlands. It was a sinister force that seeped into one's soul and sapped the will, stole your identity, and left you a faceless shadow.

"Can we win?" he whispered.

"They are many, but so are we," Toku said, standing beside him. "I have high hopes."

"You always have high hopes," Saigorei said with a nervous laugh. "I try to be more realistic. This is the same power that murdered Mikio and stole Toturi from the palace. The Darkness transformed the Emperor into a murderous lunatic. That is the power we face, Toku."

"The Scorpion have taught us how to fight," Toku said, fingering the crystal dagger he wore at his hip. "We are prepared now."

"Are we?" Saigorei asked. "Toturi was the greatest man I have ever known, that any of us have ever known. If even he could not resist the Darkness, how can we? What hope do we have to succeed where even the Black Lion failed?"

Toku looked at Saigorei, his usually cheerful face now fixed in a determined scowl. "Toturi faced the Darkness alone, my friend," he said. "We have each other. Surely you do not intend to die before you have avenged your Emperor?"

Saigorei chuckled. "No, Toku," he said. "I suppose I do not."

The battle had begun, but it would soon be over.

Kitsu Motso was no stranger to defeat. Though his own armies were invariably victorious, he had seen enough battle in his time to know when defeat was imminent. So it was now. His Lion soldiers

had fought bravely, but the odds were against them. The very earth of the Shadowlands seemed to fight against them, terrain shifting and moving to give the enemy ample cover and opportunity for ambush. The armies of the undead and faceless ninja were endless — but even those had not defeated them.

It was Akuma, leading a legion of fallen Lion and the oni that had taken Okura's name, who truly spelled their doom. Motso had seen the faces of his troops when the demon appeared. He had seen the hope drain from them when they recognized their fallen kinsmen. The Lion had stood divided before, at the Day of Thunder, and it had nearly destroyed them. Today there would be no Matsu Tsuko to unite them. Akuma had planned too well. He had stolen the honor of the Lion and injected its poison deep into his clan's name. He ordered the Lion to fight, but he already knew what the outcome would be.

But at the height of the battle, something strange occurred. He saw Okura no Oni lift her sword high and shout a Lion battle cry. He saw her leap into battle with Akuma and strike at her demonic father, suffering a terrible wound in return. Around her, the corrupted Lion soldiers began to turn upon their Shadowlands allies, fighting savagely and giving their lives to earn their honor back. Motso charged toward the two demons but by the time he and his troops arrived Akuma was already dead.

Okura's body fell beside him with a heavy thud. Her pale golden eyes looked up at him in sorrow.

"For the honor... of the Lion," she whispered.

Motso knelt beside her, whispered a short prayer for the demon's soul, if she had one, and led his troops to victory.

Isawa Hochiu waited beneath the stone archway, looking out at the central arena of Voltturnum. An enormous stone portal, like a serpent devouring its tail, dominated the center of the city. It shone from within, a brilliant display of color. Hochiu looked away, his eyes burning. He realized he had been staring into the heart of creation, a nexus of all the realms that were. Yet at the heart of the light there had been a shadow, a nameless corruption that was not meant to be.

This was hopeless. He had never sensed such power. The Grand Master and the Elemental Council did not possess such magic. Even the Air Dragon, who had borne him here, did not radiate such power. If he did not even understand what the Darkness had unleashed here how could he stop it?

Then Hochiu thought of the dragon again, the noble creature who had sacrificed itself to carry him this close. He thought of the other Masters beyond the city, risking their souls to weave the ritual that slowed the gate's opening, despite the wicked spirits that were so prevalent in this place. He thought of all the noble samurai who fought in the city streets without any magic at all, with nothing more than crystal and steel. So many had risked so much so that he could have this chance. How could he shame their sacrifice by failing them?

He could not.

The Master of Fire looked at the Gate again, and this time he saw a man's silhouette obscuring its light. It was a tall man, garbed in robes of deepest black. Hochiu saw the madness in the man's eyes, the look of a killer who believed his work was righteous. He wondered if his father had looked the same on the Day of Thunder.

Hochiu made his way into the arena.

It was a name that started this, Hitomi mused as she gazed down from the Celestial Heavens, and a name would end it.

Since her ascension, what once had been called Hitomi was now a hazy and indistinct thing. A part of her was still the woman she was, the samurai raised among the Mirumoto, who adored her brother Satsu and hated Hida Yakamo for taking his life. A part of her was Togashi, whose wisdom she had inherited on the Day of Thunder. She could recall the early days of the Empire, see clearly the eyes of his sister Doji and remember the smooth voice of clever Bayushi. A part of her was Onnotangu, proud Lord Moon. She remembered his love for Amaterasu and the jealousy he bore toward his children. She remembered the whispers of the little shadow with no name, and the promises it made. And a part of her was the Darkness, that which was Nothing. She remembered a time before the universe existed, a time before there were names. All was calm and predictable and good, if a bit lonely. A part of her longed for that time to return.

She scowled and squashed such thoughts. She had walked that path already, and it had nearly driven her clan to destruction. All of these other thoughts and memories that flickered through her mind — they were nothing. She was Hitomi, now and forever. All of the other voices were simply tools to be used.

And so she used them now. With Onnotangu's memories, she recalled the time when the Darkness escaped being named. That lack of identity gave it power, boundless potential, made it the embodiment of unbeing. The Darkness had grown stronger since then. Even with the authority of the Moon, it could not be named easily. So long as it hid behind the name of Goju Adorai, it could not be named at all, but even once he was removed the name must be chosen carefully or it would mean nothing.

Togashi's wisdom whispered the clues. It must be a name that stood for all that the Darkness would destroy. It must be a name that embodied honor, duty, and purity. Yet it must be a name that none now possessed, for a shared name would be too weak to truly tame the Darkness.

Then Hitomi knew the answer.

Goju Adorai stood at the threshold of Oblivion's Gate and stared into infinity. He had never seen anything so beautiful. The landscape of all the Spirit Realms spread out before him. The bloody plains of Toshigoku. The lush fields of Yomi. The Dragon Road of Tengoku. The chaotic hell of Jigoku. All of this would soon be his domain. His brethren would extend their grasp throughout all of creation, where their enemies could not defeat them. The Celestial Order would inevitably be twisted to his unique vision.

"We will create a glorious new world," he said.

The Darkness recoiled at the words. It did not wish to create. Adorai gave a small smile, held out his hands in a soothing gesture. "Creation and destruction are one and the same, my master," he said. "In creation, one destroys nothingness. What we shall create shall celebrate the power of Nothingness in return."

The Darkness seemed unconvinced, but they had come too far for it to truly resist. Adorai was in command now.

The sound of a sword being drawn from its saya sounded behind Adorai, but the ninja was not truly surprised. Another hero come to interrupt his work, without understanding what he was doing.

The ninja turned to face the Master of Fire...

SOUL OF THE EMPIRE - TIMELINE

YEAR 1133, MONTH OF THE DRAGON (MID-SPRING)

DEATH OF TOTURI I

Wounded unto death, Emperor Toturi I is tormented by nightmares. He awakens and realizes that his connection to the Lying Darkness is almost complete. He can sense the minions of Goju Adorai deep in the Shadowlands, their attempts to breach Oblivion's Gate and consume the Realm of Blessed Ancestors. He tells Kaede all that he can, but he fears that his injuries will soon leave him too weak to resist his madness.

If Toturi is to die, he decides, he will die a samurai rather than fade into nothing. While Kaede watches in mourning, Toturi takes up his blade and commits seppuku to deny the Darkness his soul. Matsu Hiroru serves as Toturi's second, thus fulfilling Norikazu's prophecy by killing his master.

Kaede then shares what Toturi has revealed to Ginawa and Matsu Hiroru. While she assumes command of the Empire as Empress, the two men hurry to Oblivion's Gate to see how far the Darkness' plans have developed.

THE ALLIANCE FALLS

Humiliated by defeat after defeat, the Minor Clan samurai who have thrown in their lot with Yoritomo grow increasingly



disgruntled by the leadership of the Mantis Clan. Talk of abandoning the Alliance with the Mantis spreads through each of the Minor Clans but only reaches a breaking point when the Fox make their move. When Yoritomo proposes marriage to the Fox Clan daimyo Ryosei, she not only refuses but abandons the Alliance. She instead throws her clan's lot in with the Crane, who have been seeking for a way to weaken Yoritomo for months since his invasion of their lands. With the Fox's departure, many of Yoritomo's other allies begin to wonder if their best interests truly lie with the Son of Storms.

THE MOTO WAR

The undead Moto ride forth from the Shadowlands to destroy their untainted kin, with Otaku Kamoko riding at their head. Khan Moto Gaheris meets their challenge, summoning his armies to face them. The two armies meet in a fierce combat. Otaku Kamoko raises her sword, and then turns her steed to charge against the corrupted Moto. Not surprised by her betrayal, Moto Tsume carves his way through his opponents and engages Kamoko personally. Though he mortally wounds Kamoko, he is unprepared for the sudden appearance of Kyoso no Oni. The Oni Lord utterly destroys Tsume, but before she can consume Kamoko's soul, Shinjo arrives on the battlefield. Kyoso flees as Gaheris crushes the rest of the undead Moto.

SHINJO'S DEPARTURE

Upon hearing of Otaku Kamoko's death, Shinjo is greatly disturbed. She blames herself for the downfall of one of the Unicorn's greatest heroes, and concludes that the time of the Kami in the mortal realm is done. She ascends to the Celestial Heavens, pausing only long enough to set Kamoko's soul in the sky as a constellation, so that she might guide Unicorn heroes who would otherwise be lost in the darkness.

DARKNESS SPREADS TO THE SPIRIT REALMS

Though Oblivion's Gate is not yet open, many of the Darkness' more powerful minions slip through the cracks in the gate to the Spirit Realms beyond. The Darkness thus extends its influence to corrupt the realms of Yume-do, Yomi, Gaki-do, Toshigoku, and Meido in an attempt to collapse the entire

Celestial Order. The touch of the Nothing destroys the souls of the honored dead, the dreams of Yume-do, and the mad spirits of the Realm of Slaughter, leaving nothing behind. Some among the Kitsu family realize that something terrible is happening, but their shame and dishonor are so great at this point that none heed their warnings.

THE MANTIS RETREAT

With the return of the Scorpion Clan to their lands, the departure of many of his Minor Clan allies, the strong resistance of the Phoenix, and the mounting evidence that his campaign has been manipulated by servants of the Darkness, Yoritomo decides to cut his losses and return his armies to their home islands. It is a bitter day for the Mantis, who have never known defeat under Yoritomo's rule. The announcement of Yoritomo's marriage to Moshi Wakiza, daughter of the Centipede daimyo, brightens the spirits of his clan to some small degree.

THE DEATH OF NAKA KURO

Realizing that his time will soon be over, Naka Kuro journeys to White Oak Plain and begins a powerful ritual intended to draw out all Darkness Spawn who disguise themselves as Phoenix. The spell is successful, but also draws all of these creatures to the Grand Master's presence. He is prepared when they come, calling down fire, thunder, and ice to smite his countless foes. Neither Kuro nor any minions of the Lying Darkness survive the conflagration.

THE DRAGON CLAN EMERGES

A vast army of Dragon Clan samurai, shugenja, and tattooed mystics appears on their southern border and are heralded in the courts by their Scorpion allies. Armed with the secrets of the Scorpion and the knowledge of their own clan, the Dragon begin to spread out from their borders and cut down the minions of the Lying Darkness wherever they are found in the northern lands of the Empire. Togashi Hoshi, now Champion of the Dragon, visits the lands of the Phoenix to speak with the Empress in private. The two discuss the nature of the Lying Darkness, and the need for a unified Empire. Though

the Phoenix and Dragon are on far from good terms since the defection of the Agasha, the two agree to a show of unity by working in concert to end much of the crime and chaos that has plagued their lands.

YEAR 1133, MONTH OF THE SERPENT (LATE SPRING)

THE TENTH KAMI APPEARS

Guided by the wisdom of Isawa Kaede, the ronin Ginawa and his comrade Matsu Hiroru find Voltturnum, the ruin of an ancient troll city, deep within the Shadowlands. There, they discover the ancient artifact called Oblivion's Gate. At the threshold of the Gate, Ginawa and Hiroru meet Ryoshun, the tenth child of Amaterasu and Onnotangu. Though some minions of the Darkness have passed through into the realms beyond, his presence has kept the Gate from being completely overwhelmed. If Ryoshun falls, then the Darkness will run rampant across Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors, consuming the ancestors that guide the Empire and thus consuming their descendants as well. Ginawa and Hiroru stand by the Kami's side, promising to help him hold the rift until the armies of the Empire arrive.

REVELATION OF THE ENEMY

With the hostilities ending between the Mantis and the Phoenix, the Kaiu Wall secure, and the heart of Rokugan slowly returning to peace, Empress Kaede convenes an Imperial Court comprised mostly of family daimyo and Clan Champions. The Dragon and Scorpion representatives present

their knowledge of the Lying Darkness to the assemblage. The Kitsus's pleas are finally heard, as many in attendance share their accounts of how the ancestors are no longer heard, or how the elemental magic of the mortal realm seems to be harder to call upon each and every day. The Unicorn step forward to share their Clan's historical tales of the Darkness, and by the end of the day, each Clan has added some detail to the portrait of the Empire's enemy.

MARCH TO VOLTURNUM

Having heard nothing from Ginawa and Matsu Hiroru, Kaede decides that she can wait no longer. She gathers her Champions and reveals the location of Oblivion's Gate in the ruined city of Voltturnum, unleashing the armies of the Great Clans upon the Shadowlands. The Crab offer their jade stores to protect the massive army, though O-Ushi worries that the march to Voltturnum will leave the Crab with precious little jade afterward.

THE PEARL

During the march to Voltturnum, Kuni Yori's former ally, Iuchi Karasu, confronts the mad tsukai. Though the power of Yori's maho is greater than Karasu's pure magic, Karasu carries a powerful mystical pearl given to him by the Naga. Karasu draws both himself and Yori into the depths of the magical pearl, where Yori's madness can no longer harm the Empire.

RETURN OF MYTH

Outraged by the Lying Darkness' predations throughout the Spirit Realms, the elemental dragons return to the mortal realm. The elemental dragons wish to ensure not only that the Darkness is defeated, but that Oblivion's Gate is destroyed as well. Unfortunately the dragons can interfere with the mortal realm only in limited ways, lest they risk becoming mortal and sacrifice their great power and wisdom. Despite this limitation, the dragons subtly offer guidance and inspiration to the human heroes, helping them prepare themselves for the challenges ahead.



DEATH OF OKURA NO ONI

As the armies of the clans continue their march south, the Oni Lord Akuma corners Kitsuo Moto's force and begins savagely slaughtering them. Okura no Oni fights beside her father, but is slowly overcome by the courage the Lion display in the face of impossible odds. As Akuma prepares to kill the Lion Commander, Okura unsheathes her weapon and challenges her demonic "father." Stunned by the betrayal, Akuma lashes out at his daughter, wounding her fatally, but underestimates her strength. Before she perishes she deals Akuma a lethal blow in return. The Lion stand by in awe, amazed to see that Okura, who had stolen a Lion's name in an attempt to corrupt the clan, is instead redeemed by the honor of the Lion.

YEAR 1133, MONTH OF THE HORSE (EARLY SUMMER)

THE BATTLE OF OBLIVION'S GATE

As the army of Rokugan clashes against the hordes of the Shadowlands, the heroes of the Empire reach their goal — the city of Voltturnum. The Lying Darkness, led by Goju Adorai, makes its stand, barring the invaders from Oblivion's Gate. Ryoshun is overwhelmed by his attackers but he delays them long enough for Ginawa and Hiroru to escape and join the Empress' armies.

When hope seems lost, the Gate opens wide, but even Goju Adorai is not prepared for what he sees. An army of spirits led by Toturi I charges through Oblivion's Gate and attacks the enemy from behind. Though even these reinforcements are not enough to truly sway the battle, their timely arrival prevents the battle from becoming a complete rout. The Gate closes again behind the spirit armies, but only for a time.

SHOSURO AND THE SLEEPING LAKE

Even as the heroes battle at Oblivion's Gate, Shosuro appears at Kyuden Bayushi. She can put off the inevitable no longer. The time has come for her to kill Bayushi Kachiko and replace Adorai as the true avatar of the Lying Darkness. Kachiko waits for Shosuro at Sleeping Lake, in the caverns beneath Kyuden Bayushi. When Shosuro appears, Bayushi manifests in the lake as well. He draws both Kachiko and Shosuro into the lake with him — though they will both perish there, their souls will be far from the Darkness' reach. In a moment of darkest irony, the returned spirit of Doji Hoturi, Kachiko's lover, somehow arrives at Sleeping Lake just as Kachiko dies.

ADORAI'S DEFEAT

The battle rages in the City of Voltturnum, but Adorai's minions hold fast around Oblivion's Gate. Yoritomo attempts to defeat Goju Adorai, but falls. The armies of the clans are shocked — if even the Son of Storms cannot defeat Adorai, does anyone stand a chance? Basking in his inevitable triumph, Adorai finally opens Oblivion's Gate wide once more and prepares to lead the charge into the realms beyond.

Desperate to aid the mortals, the Dragon of Air intervenes despite all warnings from his brethren. He carries Isawa Hochiu, newly appointed Master of Fire, into the heart of the city. Though oni and Darkness spawn tear at the dragon's scales, he presses on and delivers Hochiu safely before fading into the shadows.

The Master of Fire engages Goju Adorai in combat, but it seems even the young master cannot match Adorai's power. Adorai plunges his hand into the Master of Fire's chest, and is surprised as Hochiu appears behind him, striking him down with a crystal sword. As Adorai dies, he sees the image of the wounded Hochiu shift, replaced by that of a Shosuro actress. Though the Darkness had sought to twist the Scorpion Clan to its own purposes, in the end the Scorpion had only used its power to defeat Adorai.

Wasting no time, Isawa Hochiu summons all of his considerable magical might and unleashes it upon Oblivion's Gate, destroying the passage between the Spirit Realms before the remaining minions of Darkness can pass through.

HITOMI NAMES THE SHADOW

With Goju Adorai's death and the destruction of Oblivion's Gate, the Lying Darkness' presence in the mortal realm is severely weakened. The Darkness had always used Adorai's name as a shield, allowing it to move without name or definition. Now that shield has shattered.

In the Celestial Heavens, Hitomi senses the Shadow's weakness. She fulfills the duty of her predecessor, Lord Moon, and grants the Lying Darkness a name. She chooses a name that embodies the soul of the Empire, a name that symbolizes the duty of a samurai, a name that has long fallen into disuse — Akodo, the name of the fallen house of the Lion Clan.

In an instant, the Lying Darkness is completely destroyed. Those who bear the name Goju flee into the shadows, their power greatly weakened. Those who bear no name at all appear in the city of Voltturnum without any memories save that Akodo is now their name. Though they have no memory, they seem quite capable of fighting, and these individuals immediately enter the battle beside the armies of the clans. With their aid, the heroes of Rokugan drive back the remaining Shadowlands beasts.

BIRTH OF THE SHADOW DRAGON

In the shadows of Voltturnum, the Air Dragon lays dying. Severed from the Celestial Heavens by its attempt to help Hochiu and badly injured by its passage through Voltturnum, the majestic creature seems doomed. Yet, as it prepares to die, it sees a small scrap of Nothing escape even as Hitomi names the Darkness. It realizes that even though the minions of Nothing have been named, Nothing itself has existed for far too long to ever truly be named. In time, the entity that was the Lying Darkness will inevitably return.

Unwilling to accept this, the Air Dragon calls upon the last of its power and rushes forward, swallowing the scrap of Nothing. What was once the Air Dragon becomes the Shadow Dragon, heir to the Lying Darkness, wielding the power of Nothing as well as the Taint of the Shadowlands. Before the noble dragon's soul is completely consumed by the evil that suffuses it, it takes solace in the fact that it is the lesser of two evils, and so long as it survives the Lying Darkness can never truly return.

YEAR 1133, MONTH OF THE GOAT (MID-SUMMER)

THE NEW AKODO

After the withdrawal from the Shadowlands, many questions are still left unanswered. Among them is what to do with the newly named "Akodo." Some feel that they should be destroyed, as they are former minions of the Lying Darkness. Emperor Toturi instead commands that they be treated with compassion. What good would it do to destroy those whom the Moon herself has redeemed? Instead he reinstates the Akodo as a family of the Lion Clan and names the ronin Ginawa as their daimyo. It will fall to Ginawa and all other ronin who once bore the Akodo name to teach these lost souls what it truly means to be samurai.

It is a challenge that Akodo Ginawa gladly accepts.

WHAT'S NEW

NEW ANCESTORS

DOJI KUWANAN

Doji Kuwanan personifies the Crane philosophy that a samurai should excel at his chosen pursuits, regardless of what those pursuits are. As the younger of Doji Satsume's two sons, Kuwanan often found that attention, both good and bad, was focused upon his brother Hoturi. Throughout their youth, as Hoturi's exploits drew attention and infamy, as his prowess with the blade and success with the ladies made him a renowned figure across the Empire. Kuwanan studied with both the Crab and the Lion, learning the strategies that made those two Clans the greatest armies in Rokugan.

Hoturi's disappearance early in the Clan War, coupled with the attacks of the False Hoturi upon the Crane, gave Kuwanan a chance to shine. Although the Crane were outmatched by their opponents through most of the period, Kuwanan's leadership prevented their losses from being crippling. Hoturi fought Fu Leng as the Crane Thunder; however, many historians believe that it was the joint efforts of Doji Kuwanan and Daidoji Uji that ensured the Crane still existed as a Clan by the Day of Thunder.

Hoturi's death fighting Fu Leng left Kuwanan as Champion of a weakened, Crane Clan. He put the years between the Clan War and War Against the Darkness to good use, rebuilding the Crane holdings and refilling their coffers. Soon after Toturi was abducted by the Lying Shadow, the strength of the Crane was again tested, this time by an internal threat. Daidoji Uji, acting against Kuwanan's orders, declared war upon the Lion and captured Shiro no Yojin. Kuwanan, fearing both the loss of face and the likelihood of reprisals from the Lion, was forced to declare war upon Uji and his followers.

During the Crane Civil War, Kuwanan proved that he not only understood the battle principles of the Crab and Lion, but he knew how to apply their lessons to counter Daidoji

tricks. Uji, cut off from support and pressed by both Lion and Crane forces, unleashed every technique in the Daidoji arsenal, many of which were both highly dishonorable and extremely effective. Crane casualties on both sides of the Civil War were high, with a great many of Kuwanan's loyalists maimed or crippled Daidoji guerrilla tactics. However, as he did in the Clan War, Kuwanan fought a grinding attrition war, minimizing his losses as best he could. By the time Uji and Kuwanan made their peace with each other, having discovered that their conflict was instigated by the Lying Darkness, Kuwanan's leadership ensured that enough Cranes survived to contribute to the march upon Volturum.

Kuwanan served and led the Crane capably until his death during the War of Spirits. His army, outnumbered and outmatched by a pincer movement from Hantei XVI's forces, needed time to withdraw from the field of battle. A unit needed to remain behind in order to safeguard the retreat. Kuwanan led his personal guard into the thick of the fighting, fending off pursuit from the Spirit armies long enough for his troops to escape. Kuwanan died as he lived, putting his tactical skills to use serving the interests of the Crane.

TACTICAL MIND

You are skilled at adapting to different tactics and methods of war

Ancestor: Doji Kuwanan

Clan: Crane

Benefit: The second or succeeding time a particular attack is used against you during a combat (such as the second use of a specific Feat such as Trip or Cleave, the second casting of the same spell, or the second time a creature uses its breath weapon against you), you receive a +2 insight bonus to your AC against the attack, or +2 to the appropriate saving throw. Additionally, you receive a +2 insight bonus to your Battle skill when leading troops if you have led troops into combat against the opposing commander.

ANCESTOR: DOJI KUWANAN (6 POINTS)

You possess Kuwanan's uncanny adaptability to new tactical situations. The second time during a combat a particular School Technique, spell, kata, or other specific kind of attack (such as the Bayushi Rank 3 disarm, or the second time someone casts Fires From Within at you) is directed at you, you receive a +5 to your TN to be hit (or your opponent needs an extra +5 to their TN for the attempt to succeed). Additionally, when leading troops into battle against a commander you have faced before, you receive a Free Raise on all your Battle skill rolls.

NEW ITEMS

DRAGON'S TOOTH

When the War Against the Darkness approached its conclusion, the forces of the Empire marched upon Volturum to seal Oblivion's Gate. The journey was arduous, and many representatives of Rokugan were Lost to the Taint or consumed by the Darkness before, during, and on the journey home from the great battle. However, were it not for the assistance of the Elemental Dragons, the battle would have been lost outright.

The Elemental Dragons provided advice, offered insight, and even transported a select few heroes of the Empire to Volturnum to face the Darkness. The Dragon of Air went a step beyond that, and personally sheltered and carried Isawa Hochiu through a Tainted barrier so that the Phoenix shugenja could face, and ultimately slay, Goju Adorai, guaranteeing the victory of the Empire. The price was high; the Dragon of Air was corrupted by the Taint, eventually metamorphosing into its current incarnation, the loathsome Shadow Dragon.

In the wake of the devastation of the War Against the Darkness and the corruption of the Air Dragon, the remaining Elemental Dragons decided to return to their former roles as observers and guides, refraining from interfering in the mortal realms. However, while each had selected an Oracle to serve as a link to Rokugan, the Dragons felt that it would be prudent for them to be accessible to the mortal realms. Thus, each created a token—a tooth that contained a tiny fragment of the Dragon's power. In this way, the Dragons could have some small influence upon the fortunes of the Empire without violating their roles in the Celestial Order.

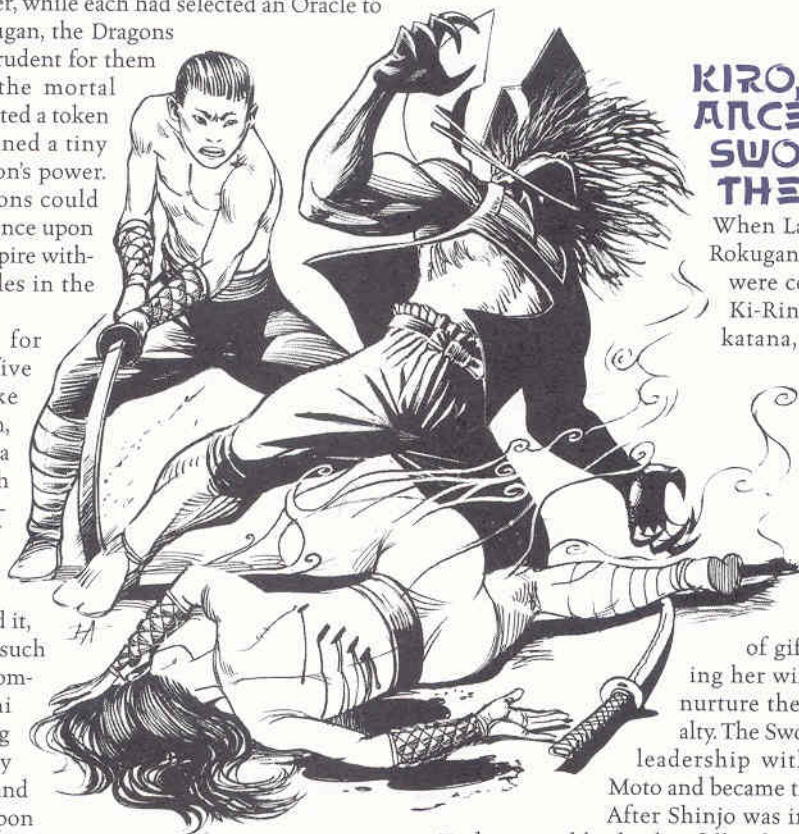
One Tooth exists for each of the five Elements, and all take the same physical form, that of a fang from a large animal. Each Dragon's Tooth contains a tiny kernel of the awareness, personality, and power of the Dragon that created it, and can be revealed as such merely by a shugenja communing with the kami of the Tooth. Activating a Tooth consists simply of snapping it in two, and focusing one's mind upon a request or boon. Should the Dragon who created the Tooth approve of the request, it will be granted. Although only one of each Tooth exists at any given time, the destruction of a Tooth usually prompts its Dragon to create another, although where and when the Tooth will appear again is impossible to predict.

A Dragon's Tooth contains a great deal of power; nearly any effect within the purview of the appropriate Dragon should be considered. As a rule of thumb, treat the effect of a Dragon's Tooth as at least equivalent to a wish cast by a 20-th level sorcerer, with the added requirement that the Dragon approves of the request. Generally, the Dragons will react favorably to requests about the following:

- Air:** information, assistance in dealing with people
- Earth:** stamina, physical prowess, help against the Shadowlands or Lying Darkness
- Fire:** combat, factual information
- Water:** healing, movement, travel
- Void:** varies greatly, but wisdom and enlightenment are particularly appropriate

A Dragon's Tooth contains a great deal of power; nearly any effect within the purview of the appropriate Dragon should be considered. There is no real limit on the scope of what a Tooth could do, so long as the Dragon approves of the request. Generally, the Dragons will react favorably to requests about the following:

- Air:** information, assistance in dealing with people
- Earth:** stamina, physical prowess, help against the Shadowlands or Lying Darkness
- Fire:** combat, factual information
- Water:** healing, movement, travel
- Void:** varies greatly, but wisdom and enlightenment are particularly appropriate



KIRO, THE ANCESTRAL SWORD OF THE KI-RIN

When Lady Shinjo originally left Rokugan with her followers, they were collectively known as the Ki-Rin Clan, and her personal katana, the Sword of the Clan.

When the Ki-Rin met, defeated, and ultimately befriended the Ujik-Hai tribe, who would eventually become the Moto family, Lady Shinjo bequeathed her sword to the chief of the Ujik-Hai in an exchange of gifts; her blade, representing her willingness to protect and nurture the Ujik-Hai, for their loyalty. The Sword became the symbol of leadership within the newly-fledged Moto and became the Khan's weapon.

After Shinjo was imprisoned by the Lying Darkness and leadership fell to her mortal descendants, the Clan changed its name to the Unicorn, reflecting that they had changed but yet held onto many of the same values. As a sign of the continued unity and perseverance of the Clan, a new katana was forged for the Shinjo family, for the use of the Clan Champion. Over the generations, this became Hayai, the Ancestral Sword of the Unicorn. Eventually, the Clan broke into two—the majority of the Clan returned to Rokugan, while the Moto remained in the Burning Sands, awaiting Shinjo's return, as she promised. Many years later, when the Darkness was beginning its ascent in Rokugan, the patience of the Moto was rewarded; Shinjo was rescued, and they accompanied her back to Rokugan.

Many things had changed within the Empire and the Unicorn Clan. Shinjo was shocked and outraged by the extent to which her Clan and the Shinjo family had been subverted by the Kolat, she cast the Shinjo down from their position of authority, to be replaced by the Moto. Soon after, Shinjo was ordered by her mother, Amaterasu, to seize the Ancestral Swords of the Great Clans as retribution for the slaying of Onnotangu. Shinjo was duty-bound to obey her mother, but



also wanted to leave her followers a symbol of the ideals they should aspire to, ideals that Shinjo felt had been obscured while the Kolat led her Clan. Shinjo presented the Ancestral Swords of the Crab, Crane, Dragon, Lion, Phoenix, Scorpion, and Unicorn to Amaterasu, who scattered the sacred blades across the heavens. Kiro, which to Lady Shinjo represented the true spirit of her Clan, was left in the hands of the Moto Khan — Gaheris.

Gaheris carried the sword into the final battle of the Blood War, when the Dark Moto faced the Unicorn. Gaheris led the combined armies of the Clan from the vanguard, facing and slaying many of his corrupted brethren. One of the foes he faced during the conflict was Moto Notu, a cunning general with centuries of leadership experience. Although Gaheris was victorious in both their personal confrontation and the Blood War, the losses among the Unicorn were severe. Not only did Otaku Kamoko fall during the battle, Kiro was lost—impaled in Notu's chest as the Dark Moto fled the field.

Notu eventually returned to the Shadowlands, and rallied with the rest of the Dark Moto in their base camp, located at Fallen Chrysanthemum Lake (see *Secrets of the Shadowlands*). There, the formerly-Dark Moto discovered that Fu Leng, angered by their failure to defeat the Unicorn, had withdrawn his blessing, leaving them weakened, aging rapidly, and aware of who they originally were. Notu attempted to journey through the Shadowlands and return the Sword to his Clan, but his wounds and Fu Leng's curse overcame him. The Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin remains lost in the Shadowlands, a forgotten relic of the Moto's dedication to Lady Shinjo's cause.

The Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin, in spite of its long exile in the Shadowlands, shows no signs of Taint or rust, and maintains its original cutting edge. Although it was once a mighty nemuranai, fully the equal of Hayai, idle years and being forgotten by most of the Empire have combined to quiet the blade. However, the sword's spirit is still strong, and shares Shinjo's conviction that people must be free to choose the causes they follow. If returned to the honored position it once held, Kiro could have a profound impact upon the Unicorn and the Empire.

The Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin is currently a +3 *keen katana of speed*, although it was formerly far more potent. Additionally, its bearer is immune to any effect that would alter his emotions or take control of his thoughts, including but not limited to *charm* spells, Kolat programming, or fear effects.

The Ancestral Sword of the Ki-Rin, in spite of its reduced state, is still a potent katana. Its bearer rolls an additional die for initiative, and keeps an additional die for both hitting and damage while wielding it in combat. Additionally, its bearer is immune to any effect that would alter his emotions or take control of his thoughts, including but not limited to Kolat programming, Fear effects, or courtier techniques that manipulate the mindset of the victim.

NEW PATHS, SCHOOLS, AND TECHNIQUES

NAGA HUNTERS

While the Crab have fought against Fu Leng and the Shadowlands for 1000 years, the Naga have opposed "the Foul"—the term for both the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness—for far longer. Through their racial memory, the Akasha, the Naga are able to pass down techniques for fighting the Foul from generation to generation. Within the depths of the Akasha lie the secrets to defeating most of the minions of the Foul.

Although all Naga are linked to the Akasha, a few are able to more easily tap the Akasha for insights. Some of those gifted individuals go on to become Vedics or Masters of the Akasha, but others, of more martial bent, find that they can intuitively face and defeat the Foul. These individuals go on to become Naga Hunters—specialists in confronting, stalking, and defeating the Foul.

The most famous incident involving the Hunters during the War Against the Darkness occurred when the Naga and Crab met, months after their aborted joint attempt to reclaim Hiruma Castle. Tensions were high, as the Crab held the Naga responsible for abandoning the Crab to die. During a key moment in their deliberations, the Balash suddenly fired an arrow at Hida O-Ushi, the leader of the Crab forces.

Before any of the Crab could react, the arrow flew through the air, striking a Goju, shape-shifted as a Crab bushi, who was poised to strike down O-Ushi. Had the Goju succeeded in attacking her, the Crab and Naga would have come to blows, neutralizing two powerful armies, needed for the march on Volturum. By saving O-Ushi and revealing a Goju in the midst of the Crab, Balash, whose disdain for humans was well known, helped to repair the relationship between the two races.

NAGA HUNTERS (PRESTIGE CLASS)

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements: Naga Race.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Knowledge (Shadowlands): 6 ranks.

Knowledge (Lying Darkness): 6 ranks.

Feats: Track, Void Use.

Class Skills: The Naga Hunters' class skills (and key ability for each skill) are Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump

(Str), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Swim (Str), Use Rope (Dex), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).
Skill Points per Level: 4 + Int modifier.

CLASS FEATURES

All of the following are features of the Naga Hunter Prestige Class.

Weapon & Armor Proficiency: If they do not already possess them, Hunters gain Proficiency with all Simple and Martial Weapons (including all the Naga Weapons in the Exotic Arms & Equipment Guide), as well as Light and Medium Armor. Armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Locks, and Tumble.

Favored Enemy: At 1st level, the Hunter may select either Shadowlands Creatures or Shadowspawn. He receives a +1 bonus on his skill and damage rolls against this type of creature, exactly as the Ranger ability of the same name. The Hunter gains the remaining category of creature as a second Favored Enemy at 3rd level, and the originally chosen Enemy's bonus increases to +2. Thus, a 3rd level Hunter could choose to receive a +2 against Shadowlands Creatures and +1 against Shadowspawn, or vice versa.

Face the Foul: At 2nd level, the Hunter gains the ability to immediately sense whether any foe he is in combat with possesses any Shadowlands Taint or Shadow Points. This will not determine how heavily corrupted his opponent is, merely if such corruption is present. This is an extraordinary ability.

Purity in Motion: At 4th level, the Hunter becomes more in tune with himself and his role as the guardian of the Naga people. Through the Akasha, he learns more about how to utilize his body in battle. So long as the Naga is not flatfooted or otherwise denied his Dex bonus to his AC, he may ignore the —1 AC and —1 Attack penalty for being of Large size.

Purge the Foul: At 5th level, the Hunter learns to tap the power of the Akasha for insights into how to defeat the Foul. He may spend a Void Point at the beginning of a combat round to receive a bonus to all his damage rolls against creatures bearing at least 1 rank of Shadowlands Taint or Shadow Points equal to his maximum Void for the duration of the round.

NAGA HUNTER (NEW PATH)

Technique Rank: 4

Path of Entry: Naga Scout or Naga Warrior 3

Path of Egress: Re-enter the same school at Rank 4

Technique: Purge the Foul: The Akasha contains countless insights and tactics for combating both the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness, gathered from hundreds of conflicts over the centuries, which the Hunters draw upon. The Hunter becomes automatically aware if any creature he is facing in combat possesses any Shadowlands Taint or Shadow Points, although he does not learn how many ranks they possess (barring other powers). Additionally, while in battle against any

creature possessing Shadowlands Taint or Shadow Point, the Hunter may add his Akasha ring to the number of dice rolled for every attack. If the Hunter is leading troops in a mass battle against Shadowlands or Lying Darkness creatures, he may also add his Akasha Ring to the number of dice rolled for his Battle skill.

UJINA TOKIMASA ACCUSED

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

Though a vast number of samurai have departed to Oblivion's Gate to fight the Shadow, many stayed within Rokugan to make sure everything was in order. Magistrates make sure farmers are undisturbed by bandits, to guard storehouses of grain and important items, and elder samurai oversee the samurai children. The party has remained in Rokugan for one of these reasons and is traveling through the Hare lands when Ujina Tomo asks for their help.

He tells the party that he was born to a former Kitsuki and had always been ronin throughout his life until he met Usagi Ozaki. The kind-hearted man had introduced him to Ujina Tokimasa. For the first time in his life he had a home to go to, and a family whose reputation depended on his conduct in the real world. He threw himself into the tasks set before him, and did not suspect anything until he began to learn the Ujina techniques under Ujina Tokimasa.

He believes that Ujina Tokimasa was the real mass murderer that terrorized the Imperial City for several months before the Emperor returned to the throne. He asks for the party's help in bringing the man to justice.

FOCUS

He explains to the party that Tokimasa promoted vicious and dishonorable acts in his dojo, with the flimsy excuse that "the ends justify the means." His suspicions started there, but he checked back upon the facts: Tokimasa was not on any record except those following his meeting with the Imperial Regent. He asked Usagi Ozaki about what happened, and many of the details of the incident seem fishy (see Chapter 2 for details). He has not seen him in real combat, but his favorite weapon is the aiguchi — coincidentally the mass murderer's weapon of choice. When he checked the records, the cultist that was accused of the murders did not have with him any of the other items that were taken from the murdered victims. Neither he, nor any of the cultists found at the temple, had an aiguchi.

STRIKE

There are many problems associated with this task. There are no men who are able to testify against Tokimasa. There are no concrete facts that tie Tokimasa to the mysterious serial killer. Tokimasa departed on the trail of a Bloodspeaker cult a week

TABLE 6-1: THE NAGA HUNTER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Favored Enemy
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+0	Face the Foul
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+1	Favored Enemy
4th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Purity in Motion
5th	+5	+4	+4	+1	Purge the Foul

before the Great Clans started their march to Oblivion's Gate, but no doubt he would return in a few weeks. The party must figure out what to do before he returns.

Ujina Tomo is a headstrong man and looks like he will confront his daimyo about the matter following his return. If the party does not aid him in his quest to prove Tokimasa the killer, he will no doubt fail and be forced to commit seppuku. If the party aids him in his quest, they are likely to take backlash from Hare samurai, ronin samurai, and some Great Clan samurai. Tokimasa might be the daimyo of a small Minor Clan family, but he is still a daimyo. Are the risks worth helping bring a murder to justice?

OLD DEBTS REPAID

ADVENTURE HOOK

CHALLENGE

The march to Oblivion's Gate is the first of its kind since the Second Day of Thunder. Once again, samurai from all of the clans must gather together and fight the common evil. During the second Day of Thunder, the clans were able to set aside their differences and work together to defeat Fu Leng. Things are not as easy this time around. On the Day of Thunder, the clans were in familiar surroundings. Though it was horrifying to see the beloved Imperial City overrun by Shadowlands beasts it was still the same land that they had seen for their entire lives. For many samurai the march to Oblivion's Gate was their first venture into the Shadowlands. Unity is the most important ideal to keep at this time around, but the pressure seems to bring up old rivalries among the clans.

FOCUS

The divisions begin almost immediately, as the samurai of the clans separate and cluster together with other samurai from their same clan. Little communication occurs between the clans except for important messages about which direction to move and who would take the next shift. The samurai who are unused to fighting within the Shadowlands get anxious and angry, for they cannot kill their enemy when their enemy is the ground they walk on. When samurai from traditionally opposing clans meet, snide words are exchanged, and the party is approached several times by belligerent samurai bringing up rivalries, recent and ancient (such topics could include the recent defection of the Agasha family to the Phoenix clan, the Yasuki migration to the Crab clan, the disrespect Kakita showed to Matsu at the Test of the Emerald Champion, or personal insults borne by the samurai's grandfather). It is only a matter of time before the close proximity with the other clans will force opposing samurai to collide.

STRIKE

After a shift in which the party rests, a samurai screams out in anger. In his sleep, someone has taken all of his jade fingers, akin to a death sentence this deep into the Shadowlands. He accuses his rival of stealing the jade so that he would die a painful death. The rival states that the accusation is vile and false. No one will come forth and testify against either of the samurai. Samurai from both factions claim that the other has offended them by their lying, and the situational outbursts

The actual fate of the jade is up to the GM. Though the group is deep in the Shadowlands, it is possible a creature stole the jade. It could be that the wronged samurai hid the jade himself, so that he would have an excuse to finally kill his despised enemy. Perhaps the samurai was simply careless with his jade and lost it in the previous day's march. Perhaps the victimized samurai was correct and it was indeed the work of his rival. In any case, the party has a crisis on their hands that they must help avert before Shadowlands beasts catch up to the army's position.

IMPORTANT NPCs

SHOSURO YUDOKA, SHOSURO FAMILY DAIMYO

The lord of the Shosuro is unusual, even for a Scorpion. Like many of his clan mates, Yudoka lives a secret life. Unlike other Scorpion, it is the dark side of his soul that he exposes to Rokugan, hiding any pretense of civility under his long dark kimono and porcelain mask. Few can truly call the Shosuro daimyo their ally, and only one man in the entire world dares to call him a friend — Bayushi Yojiro. None but the Scorpion Champion know just how closely Yudoka treads to the edge of madness, and it is Yojiro's influence that has kept the ninja completely self-controlled.

Yudoka was born three years before the Scorpion Clan Coup, the eldest son of Shosuro Hametsu and his wife Mikiko. Hametsu saw himself as perhaps the most successful Shosuro daimyo in generations, and saw his young heir as his opportunity to continue the prosperity of the Shosuro after he had passed on. From birth, Yudoka was guarded by every resource Hametsu had at his disposal, even during the time of the Clan Wars. When the Scorpion were exiled from the Empire, the Shosuro daimyo did the only thing that he knew would save his son — he abandoned him and his younger sister among the Crane as nameless children of the Shosuro. The young heir would never survive being hidden among the Scorpion caravans bound for the Burning Sands, and whatever had moved against the Scorpion Clan would surely come after the children of important lords.

It was during this time the heir of Shosuro Hametsu finally came into his own. Without the suffocating presence of his father, he passed his gempukku with the ninja of the Shosuro and took the name Yudoka. Shosuro Yudoka became one of the most talented students the Shosuro Shinobi Academy had seen and because nearly no one knew of the boy's lineage, he risked his life constantly on missions for the hidden Scorpion Clan. For two years, Yudoka advanced in both skill and acknowledged rank among the Shosuro ninja groups to the point where he was training his own small group of initiates. Among these fledgling ninja were several young Scorpion liberated from the "care" of the Crane family, including a young woman named Nishiko. It took only a month for Yudoka's feelings for the ninja woman to become apparent to both himself and to her, who happily shared his love.

While the Shosuro toiled under cover of darkness, the Empire slipped into chaos. There seemed to be no end in sight for the danger that threatened the Scorpion and the Empire. Desperate to do what she could, Nishiko spied on even the masters of the Shosuro in some effort to learn everything she possibly could. When the young woman overheard Yudoka's



name mentioned as a candidate for "Shadow Branding", and the unfortunate (but necessary) effect it would have on him, she offered herself in his place. She was less skilled, she reasoned, and therefore less valuable an agent to lose to the Darkness. The Shosuro agreed, and Nishiko never spoke of the matter to her beloved.

When the Scorpion returned, Yudoka and Nishiko were split in the confusion of the countless duties and missions that had to be undertaken to secure the Scorpion's position once again within the Empire and prepare themselves to strike back at the Darkness. The Shosuro elders that returned also came for Yudoka at the order of Shosuro Hametsu — though the daimyo did not return from the Burning Sands, he made it clear his son must be found and named heir of the family. Suddenly buried in responsibility as the Shosuro daimyo, Yudoka could not find time to slip away and find his lover.

For the time being, Shosuro Yudoka leads his family into war against the Lying Darkness, but a small part of his soul whispers to him in the night. Out of the corner of his eye, every night, he sees movement that seems familiar, but he can never discern if he is truly seeing something or being driven slowly mad by the stress of his station.

SHOSURO YUDOKA

Male human Scorpion (Ftr6/Nin 6): CR 12; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 6d10+12 plus 6d6+12; hp 95; Init +11; Spd 40 ft.; AC 27 (touch 14, flat-footed 27); Atk 13 keen ninja-to +16/+11/+6 melee (1d6+5 damage); SQ Class skill - Poison (family bonus), Ninja Dodge (+3), Sneak Attack +3d6, Poison Use, Speed of Darkness, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, flanking); Honor: 0; AL LE; SV Fort +11, Ref +14, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 14; Height 5 ft. 7 in.

Skills and Feats: Speak Language (Rokugani, High Rokugani), Balance +9, Bluff +10, Climb +14, Escape Artist +6, Hide +20, Jump +12, Move Silently +20, Ride +12, Spot +8, Swim +14, Tumble +14; Bayushi's Technique, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Needle Strike, Speed of the Kami, Spring Attack, Stunning Blade, Void Use.

Dojo: Brother's Gift; **Kata:** Dwell in Darkness, Poisoned Wind.

Possessions: +3 keen ninja-to, kote of armor +5, cloak of stealth (as cloak of elvenkind), boots of stealth (as boots of elvenkind), amulet of natural armor +4, black stone netsuke (casts darkness as a 10th level sorcerer 3/day), ring of protection +4. In addition, Yudoka carries numerous tools useful to his activities as a ninja that vary depending on the time of day.

SHOSURO YUDOKA

Earth: 3

Willpower: 4

Water: 3

Perception: 6

Fire: 4

Agility: 6

Air: 4

Reflexes: 6

Void: 3

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 2, Bayushi Bushi 2

Dojo: Brother's Gift

Honor: 0.6

Glory: 8.1

Advantages: Magic Resistance (2 ranks), Quick, Social Position (Shosuro Family Daimyo), True Friend (Bayushi Yojiro)

Disadvantages: Driven (hunt remaining Goju), Insensitive

Skills: Athletics 5, Blowgun 4, Climbing 3, Climbing Tools 4, Defense 4, Explosives 5, Hand-to-Hand 2, Intimidation 5, Investigation 5, Kyujutsu 6, Lore: Lying Darkness 3, Ninja-to 5, Poison 4, Shintao 3, Stealth 6

Kata: Dwell in Darkness, Poisoned Wind.

GOJU ADORAI, MASTER OF THE LYING DARKNESS

"Why do you fight me?"

"I watch as you scurry like ants under the wheels of destiny, and you are all ground one by one, cursing your fates. I was there when the stars fell from the sky, and you crawled from your hiding places to worship the beings that the Heavens had spewed onto your land. No... that was not me. I was not



there, but it speaks to me of such times. How little you knew of the things that moved beyond your small tribes. How you paid homage to the children of Sun and Moon, all the while ignorant of how false your little gods were. I have seen the universe for what it is — a cold and empty place. The Sun and Moon, in all their benevolence, left a small scrap of this truth for me to discover, and it has shared its knowledge of all things with me. The Sun never knew it, and the Moon kept it locked away, forgotten and alone for its own purposes.

"This is the 'wisdom' of your Order, mortals. The Nothing that was once the universe was reduced to a disfavored slave of the Moon, and left to suffer. Did Onnotangu think that such a thing would wait forever, patiently obeying its master's command and will? None of you understand the depths of hatred that can be found not simply when you have been left alone, but when you have been utterly forsaken by everything you have ever known. None of you understand what the Nothing would have done, had I not befriended its shadows.

"I would have my revenge on the Sun, the Moon, their children, and all that thought that this world had become a land for them to conquer and divide amongst themselves. For eternity, I was all things... no. I was Goju. The Nothing was the primal matter from which the universe sprang, and it wished to return all of creation back to its natural state. It was alone and powerless to do so, however. Alone until I came along. Powerless until I taught it strength.

"At first, I tried to master the Nothing with the arrogance of my mortal blood. Surely, I reasoned, this force was not unlike the elemental kami that could be mastered by those who knew how. I was mistaken, and all of reality nearly suffered for it. Do you understand how close your precious Empire came to oblivion just as it was being created? The Nothing could have wiped out all of existence long ago, but I begged it, and by doing so I taught it mercy. It would not reduce everything to the emptiness that it once knew, but it would share its comfort with those who it understood best. Those who were alone. Afraid. Angry. We took the pain of these things away, the

Nothing and I, until all that remained was the certainty borne by singular purpose and a quiet fulfillment.

"But we were betrayed. The Scorpion promised us understanding, but instead tried to dominate us. They paid for their arrogance in a way that I taught to the Nothing. Lies and shadow — all that remained of my mortal self — clouded the minds and souls of the Scorpion as we stole them away, one by one. We sought allies among the Unicorn next, but they were a proud and suspicious people. They fought our presence at every turn and rebuked our attempts to reason with them. We were driven back by crystal and fire... but not forever.

"Look upon your Empire as it burns and fades. See your history disappear as the souls of your ancestors are erased from existence by the touch of my power. You have brought this fate upon yourselves with your ignorance. Come to me with your weapons, your crystal, your fire, and your honor. I will turn them all aside and bring you the truth you cannot bear, the reality that you cannot destroy with your weapons. I could have saved you, once, but you have all taught me the price of such folly.

"I am not a dark force that seeks to undo the Empire. I am your own shadow, come to repay all the kindness you have ever shown us."

GOJU ADORAI

Male human Scorpion (Nin 20): CR 40; Medium-size humanoid (Oracle template); HD 20d12 +40 ; hp 253; Init: +14; Spd 40 ft.; AC 28 (touch 28, flat-footed 28); Atk +31/+26/+21/+16 melee +5 *dishonorable ninja-to*; SQ Oracle Qualities (DR 35/+5, SR 30, Electricity Immunity), Sneak Attack +12d6, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus, Flanking), Speed of Darkness, Shadow Run, Ninja Dodge (+5); Honor 0; AL CE; SV Fort +18, Ref +30, Will +23; Str 22, Dex 27, Con 15, Int 23, Wis 25, Cha 19; Shadow Points: 10; Ht: 5'5"; Skills and Feats: Speak Language (High Rokugani, Kami, Rokugani), Bluff +27, Concentration +25, Diplomacy +27, Disguise +27, Hide +31, Innuendo +30, Listen +30, Move Silently +31, Read Lips +29,

Spellcraft +29, Spot +30, Tumble +31; Bayushi's Technique (2x), Child of Shadow, Speed of the Kami, Stunning Blade, Stealthy Casting, Versatile (Concentration, Spellcraft), Way of the Scorpion;

Spells Known (6/7/7/7/6/6/6/6/6); base DC 24 + spell level): 0 — acid splash, dancing lights, detect magic, daze, ghost sound, mage hand, mending, open/close, touch of fatigue; 1 — cause fear, color spray, mage armor, silent image; 2 — blur, darkness, fog cloud, misdirection, whispering wind; 3 — deep slumber, displacement, gaseous form, major image; 4 — confusion, greater invisibility, mass reduce person, polymorph; 5 — baleful polymorph, dominate person, shadow evocation, teleport; 6 — chain lightning, shadow walk, Tenser's transformation; 7 — mass hold person, project image, reverse gravity; 8 — greater shadow evocation, polymorph any object, scintillating pattern; 9 — energy drain, shades, weird

Possessions: +5 dishonorable ninja-to

Note: Though not a true Oracle, Goju Adorai's impressive power and mastery of the Lying Darkness grants him abilities similar to an Oracle of Air. Adorai is not restricted in how he may use his power, nor does he have the Divine the Future ability. Additionally, the spells gained by the Oracle template are considered to be cast as a Sorcerer instead of a Shugenja.

GOJU ADORAI

Earth: 5

Willpower: 5

Water: 6

Strength: 8

Fire: 7

Intelligence: 8

Air: 6

Reflexes: 8

Void: 0

School/Rank: Shosuro Shinobi 5, Bayushi Bushi 3

Dojo: None

Honor: 0.0

Glory: 0.0

Advantages: Magic Resistance (2 ranks)

Disadvantages: None

Skills: Athletics 5, Blowgun 4, Climbing 3, Climbing Tools 6, Defense 6, Explosives 5, Hand-to-Hand 7, History: Scorpion Clan 6, Intimidation 7, Investigation 5, Kyujutsu 6, Lore: Lying Darkness 10, Ninja-to 8, Poison 7, Shintao 3, Spellcraft 6, Stealth 9

Spells: As the mortal manifestation of the Lying Darkness, Adorai can use the power of the Nothing to effectively create any sort of spell he chooses. Adorai focuses on creating effects to disorient, mislead, or disable rather than cause outright destruction.

ISAWA HOCHIU

Few things are as vital as hope. Within Isawa Hochiu, the son of the madman Isawa Tsuke, the fires of hope drive his soul and body onward where a thousand other mortals would have failed. Just as the young Phoenix was old enough to understand the concepts of war, suffering, and betrayal, he watched his father grow mad from the touch of the Shadowlands and turn upon his own clan. Though the previous Master of Fire was eventually destroyed, he cast a long shadow over the future of the Phoenix Clan, and those who looked at Hochiu could not help but be reminded of the man who had slaughtered countless Phoenix. A lesser child would have bowed under the weight of such a history and spent a quiet life in solitude, contemplating the failures of his family.

Hochiu long ago refused to be such a "lesser" child. Even at an early age, he knew the weight that was placed not only on his father's betrayal, but the quiet distrust that had evolved around the Elemental Council from the corruption of four of the Five Masters. He knew that the Phoenix would publicly follow the command of the Council so long as the clan existed, but simple declarations and explanations could never erase the shadow of doubt that fallen over the Isawa. Hochiu threw himself into his studies, perfecting the strength of his body and mind, while cultivating the mercy within his soul that he knew his father ultimately lacked. For every great deed of heroism Hochiu performed, he tempered it with an equal display of compassion and understanding. Those that are wary of the power Tsuke's son has accumulated in such a short time are quickly comforted when they see the whole picture that is the Phoenix's new Master of Fire.

For his part, Hochiu does not yet consider himself worthy of his position. He knows that he is a remarkable young man — it is not ego, but his analytical Isawa mind that tells him this — but there is still much potential within him that remains unlocked. He has helped reform the Elemental Council with the aid of his cousin, Taeruko, under the guidance of Grand Master Naka Kuro. Though Isawa Kaede and Agasha Gennai sit upon the council and have much more experience than the young Hochiu, it is during these times of strife that the Council knows it must lean upon its Master of Fire. When the Mantis came to pillage his homelands, it was Hochiu who led the counterattack that eventually drove Yoritomo from Phoenix lands, and since that time, there has been none among his Clan who dare doubt his devotion to the Way of the Phoenix.

ISAWA HOCHIU, MASTER OF FIRE, GENERAL OF THE FIRESTORM LEGION

Male human Phoenix, Shu 4/ Ten 7: CR 11; Medium-size humanoid (human); HD 11d6+44; hp 82; Init: +4; Spd 30 ft.; Atk +5 flaming katana +13/+8 melee, 1d10+9 damage +1d6 fire; AC 26 (touch 16, flat-footed 22); SQ Class Skill — Spellcraft, Element Focus (Fire), Elemental surge (2/day), Improved Element Focus (+3), Sense Elements, +5 caster level, +1 caster level with Fire spells; Honor 3; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 18, Int 20 (26), Wis 12, Cha 17; Maximum Void 3; Ht: 6'1".

Skills and Feats: Speak Language - Rokugani, High Rokugani, Kami, Alchemy +22, Battle +23, Concentration +26, Iaijutsu Focus +25, Knowledge (elements) +30, Knowledge (Lying Darkness) +30, Knowledge (maho) +18, Knowledge (Shadowlands) +18, Listen +10, Scry +18, Spellcraft +31, Spot +10; Depths of the Void, Friendly Kami, Ritual Magic, Skill Focus: Knowledge (elements), Superior Element Focus (Fire), Versatile (Battle, Iaijutsu Focus), Void Use, Way of the Phoenix.

Dojo: Gisei Toshi.

Spells per day: 6/8/8/8/7/7/5 base DC 25 + spell level for all Fire spells, 16 for other spells, Elemental Focus — Air. Spells Known (Isawa School) 0-level — call fire, dancing lights, flare, flaring speed, flickering flame, ghost sound, guidance, hands of clay, light, whispers of the kami; 1st — burning hands, cause fear, evil ward, eye of the sun, faerie fire, importune kami I, never alone, protection from taint, ruined earth, shocking grasp; 2nd — bull's strength, burning kiss of steel, burning the ashes, cat's grace, fires that cleanse, flame blade, heat metal, hurried steps, produce flame; 3rd — fire wings, fireball, greater magic weapon, haste, keen edge, Osano-

wo's blessing, searing light, summon nature's ally III (fire only); 4th — fire shield, importune kami IV, lightning bolt, Tamori's curse, vengeance, wall of fire, warning flame; 5th — burning steps, confusion, feeblemind, fire breath, flame strike, spell resistance, symbol of fire; 6th — chain lightning, fires of purity, greater dispelling, karma; 7th — chain lightning, importune kami VII, prismatic spray, scatter the soul's flame.

Possessions of Note: +5 ashigaru armor, +5 flaming katana, amulet of natural armor +2, haori of resistance +3, headband of intellect +6, mantle of fire, ring of protection +2.

ISAWA HOCHIU, MASTER OF FIRE, GENERAL OF THE FIRESTORM LEGION

Earth: 3

Water: 3

Strength: 5

Fire: 6

Air: 3

Reflexes: 4

Void: 4

School/Rank: Isawa Tensai (Fire) 4

Dojo: Gisei Toshi

Honor: 3.1

Glory: 6.2

Advantages: Aligned to the Elements (Fire), Balance, Bente's Blessing, Daredevil, Social Position (Master of Fire)

Disadvantages: Brash, Driven (to greatness), Proud

Elemental Guardsman Secrets: Can cast Katana of Fire and Wall of Fire once per day, each, as a single action with no chance of failure and without counting against his spell slots for the day.

Skills: Calligraphy 3, Courtier 3, Diplomacy 3, Etiquette 3, Iaijutsu 7, Intimidation 6, Investigation 4, Katana 7, Lore (Elements) 4, Meditation 5, Shintao 3, Theology 3

CULT OF THE DESTROYER ACT 6: THE DESTROYER'S ISLE

"The Destroyer consumes all things, even those that belong to her."
— Feydn Rafiq

BACKGROUND

After facing the Cult's agents near the Crab-Crane border, the characters have at long last learned the location of the Cult's temple in Rokugan. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is concealed on one of the hundreds of tiny islands off Rokugan's coastline. Finding it without assistance would be almost impossible, and even with foreknowledge it is still a formidable task. Once there, they will face the most capable of the Destroyer's minions and cleanse the Empire of their corrupting influence once and for all.

If the characters have not participated in Acts 1-5 of this campaign, this adventure may still be used, although it may well lessen the impact significantly. Using the adventure in this manner is best achieved by simply having the characters

come across the island in a time of duress, possibly seeking shelter from a storm or in the aftermath of a pirate attack. In either case they will be unaware of the island's nature, but the Cult will assume they are a threat and attempt to destroy them. In the aftermath, the characters will find many unanswered questions that can lead to an entirely different direction for the campaign.

After the events of Acts 1 through 5, the characters are the most knowledgeable individuals about the Cult among all who are investigating them. The Seppun will gladly provide them with a ship, the Drifting Blossom, as well as ten guardsmen to assist them in their attack on the Cult's base. The family would like to offer more, but their recent rash of deaths has left them short-handed in many locations and waiting for reinforcements to arrive seems to be a bad idea.

SCENE ONE: ON THE OPEN SEA

Read the following:

The deck of the *Drifting Blossom* pitches dangerously as it lurches from one cresting wave to another in an endless series of watery mountains. The *Drifting Blossom's* captain, a grizzled old man named Seppun Mitori, looks at you with a mirthless grin. "It takes some time to grow accustomed to the sea," he shouts above the wind, "but even I have rarely seen water as choppy as this. I hope the information you have is correct, or we'll all die on those rocks." He gestures out in the direction of the sea, where you can make out jagged spires reaching up from the water's surface. The white foam of waves crashing against them makes it seem as if they are boiling.

A shout comes from the front of the boat. Mitori nods, and turns back to you. "The island has been sighted," he says, his tone suddenly altered. "Make ready. We land within the hour."

The information gained from Agasha Toruma in Act 5 will lead the characters to the Cult's island headquarters. Mitori and his ship are at their disposal, although Mitori will follow their commands only if he genuinely believes the characters' proposed course of action will end the Cult's threat once and for all. He and his men will gladly give their lives to end this blasphemy. Use the following information for Mitori and his men:

Seppun Mitori is a 10th level samurai. His men are 5th level samurai with an additional 3 levels in the fighter class. Their feats are a mixture of melee and skill-related feats used for sailing purposes. Because of the nature of sailing in a kobune, the Seppun have an extremely limited amount of equipment, consisting of masterwork lamellar armor and their ancestral blades. You may use the sample characters located on pages 106-107 of *Creations of Rokugan* to represent these characters if you wish.

Mitori is a Rank 4 Seppun Miharū, while his men are Rank 2. They have all their school's beginning skills at rank 4, with others related to sailing or combat at ranks 2 or 3. They have light armor and a Fine daisho. Their highest Traits are Strength and Agility at rank 4, although Mitori's Perception is 5.

SCENE TWO: CONFRONTATION

Once the ship has landed on the island, read the following:

The beach where Mitori lands the *Drifting Blossom* is empty, devoid of any sign of life. The island's interior looks to be home to a small jungle, but it is relatively meager in comparison to any of a hundred larger islands you passed on your way here. If this is truly the Cult's headquarters, there is no sign of it from where you stand.

THE ISLAND

The island that has been co-opted for the Cult's use is relatively small, only a mile across at its widest point. It exists amidst one of innumerable reefs that dominate the region between Rokugan and the Mantis Islands, making approaching it difficult at best unless a ship's crew has an established path through the razor-sharp rocks.

The island is roughly oval in shape, with a wide, sandy beach around the perimeter and thick, verdant jungle growth dominating the center. This growth is fueled by an underground spring, and there are no naturally-occurring sources of fresh water available on the island. This, combined with its remote location, have ensured it remains unoccupied throughout history.

THE CULTISTS

Despite what the characters may believe based on their previous encounters, the Cult of the Destroyer in Rokugan is yet very small. In truth, the characters have already faced a large percentage of its forces, thanks in no small part to Feydn Rafiq's manipulations. The party will almost certainly expect to face significant forces upon their arrival, which is again exactly as Feydn wishes. If they arrive with sufficient numbers, they will utterly destroy the Cult's headquarters and play directly into his hands.

Despite the Cult's small numbers, there are a handful of important individuals within the organization that are still alive. Yoritomo Utawa, Otomo Hirofumi, and Agasha Toruma are almost certainly dead, but if they survived they will be on the island along with the following individuals:

Isawa Tadashi [Shugenja 10; Isawa Shugenja (Earth) 3]
Unquestionably the most powerful among the Cult's inner circle, Tadashi is the only shugenja to have embraced the Destroyer's tenets thus far. The fact that he is still capable of working his magic is proof, in his mind, that the religion of Rokugan is little more than superstition. His magic is what allowed the Cult to create the Temple of the Destroyer that is hidden in the jungle's depths, even though it is truly nothing more than a small shrine. Tadashi is a quiet man, but very forceful when he chooses to speak. He is perhaps the most zealous of the Cult's adherents, although he has brought no one else into the organization as yet.

Kakita Hamatsu [Samurai 9; Kakita Bushi 3]

Hamatsu possesses charisma and personality in spades, traits many of his fellow cultists are noticeably lacking. With the death of Utawa, he has assumed a leadership role within the Cult, although Tadashi gives the impression that he follows Hamatsu out of convenience and not respect. Hamatsu has embraced the Cult because it affords him the opportunity for

personal power and malicious destruction, two things he considers the highest virtues. Hamatsu has three attendants, all surly Daidoji bushi, who have followed him along his blasphemous path.

Hiruma Moriko [Rogue 11; Hiruma Scout 4]

A small woman who retains a quite beauty despite the scars that cover much of her face and arms, Moriko is a Crab whose experiences in the Shadowlands shattered her faith. Desperate for something to believe in, she was easy prey for Utawa when he found her in Sunda Mizu Mura. While not a strong personality like the others, Moriko has brought more members into the Cult than any other, and trained many of them herself in the ways of stealth and assassination. In addition to the assassins the characters encountered in Act 4, there are four other Hiruma she has converted who travel with her and who will be on the island during the attack.

Ide Shizimu [Courtier 9; Ide Emissary 3]

If there is any member of the Cult who can rival Hamatsu for sheer charismatic presence, Shizimu is that person. The tall, lean Unicorn merchant has allies in virtually every clan's lands, and her network of lone merchants has allowed the Cult to move a great deal of material throughout the Empire without detection. She supplies the majority of funds that has allowed the Cult what meager successes it has thus far enjoyed. She has with her at all times a pair of yojimbo, one Shinjo and one Moto, both of whom are extremely loyal to her and who consider her safety above their own or even the Cult's.

Zurugu [Monk 11; Four Temples Monk 4]

Bitter and angry at the world, Zurugu is a former Dragon bushi who retired to the High House of Light many years ago. He studied patiently, fulfilling every task asked of him, quietly waiting his turn to become a member of the *ise zumi*. When Hitomi became Dragon Champion, it became clear to Zurugu that he would not be given that right, and he left the mountains in disgust. Somewhere in the years following, he fell in with Utawa during his travels, and has embraced the Cult for no reason other than that he can be a powerful member within it. Ironically, it is the same personal flaw that brought him to the Cult that prevented his acceptance as an *ise zumi* in the first place. Zurugu has three attendants who aid him in maintaining the temple. None have ever left the island since their indoctrination, as Zurugu does not trust them.

Yoritomo Ryozan [Fighter 9; Yoritomo Bushi 3]

Ryozan was Yoritomo Utawa's right hand man and first mate, enjoying considerable clout due solely to Utawa's status as Feydn Rafiq's chosen student. With Utawa's death, Ryozan has lost virtually all influence within the Cult, and he is extremely angry over Kakita Hamatsu's assumption of command. All of Utawa's men have been killed in one sortie or another against the characters, so Ryozan has a special hatred for them as well. He is currently the captain of Utawa's ship, although he has no crew to pilot it, and the others have been avoiding his requests to second enough men to him to return to the Mantis Islands to recruit more crewmen.

Unless the GM desires otherwise, Feydn Rafiq will have arranged for all the major cultists listed in this section to be at the island headquarters when he expects the characters to attack. His motivations are complicated, but his political agenda is best served by their demise. If even one were to survive, however, he or she could potentially resurrect the

Cult at a later date, leading to the possibility of further adventures for the party long after they believe the threat to have been destroyed.

THE INVASION

With the loss of Utawa's sailors, the Cult will be left to depend on Moriko's men for scouting purposes, and thus the *Drifting Blossom* will go undetected until only moments before its arrival, meaning the Cult will not have time to prepare properly. Their hasty battle plan unfolds as follows:

Hamatsu, Tadashi, and Ryozan go to the beach along with Hamatsu's three attendants and three of Moriko's men. They wait until the characters have exited the kobune, then Tadashi attacks them with his magic while the others use his attack to approach safely. The Cult hopes to capture the kobune and add it to their small fleet. Tadashi targets any large cluster of enemies first, most likely the Seppun guardsmen, while Hamatsu, Ryozan and the rest attempt to kill whoever appears to be in charge.

While this conflict is taking place on the beach, Moriko and her two remaining men take their places within the jungle. Any surviving enemies will be ambushed with lethal intent inside the jungle. Any group members who survive both assaults reach the hidden shrine at the island's interior. There, they discover Zurugu and his three attendants along with Shimizu and her two yojimbo. The monks all fight to the death, as do the yojimbo. Shimizu does whatever is necessary to avoid death, although she realizes she is only buying time until her execution.

STATISTICS

Hamatsu's Men: 5th level samurai / 4th level rogues

Moriko's Men: 9th level ninja

Shimizu's Yojimbo: 9th level fighters

Zurugu's Monks: 6th level monks / 2nd level inkyo

Hamatsu's Men: Rank 3 Daidoji Yojimbo

Moriko's Men: Rank 3 Hiruma Scout

Shimizu's Yojimbo: Shinjo Bushi 3 (1), Moto Bushi 3

Zurugu's Monks: Seven Fortunes Monks, Insight Rank 2

SCENE 3: AFTERMATH

On the assumption that the characters are victorious over the assembled Cult's forces, the shrine and surrounding buildings reveal little during any subsequent investigation. Most documents contain nothing of any substance, mostly detailing operations that the characters have already encountered, including Toruma's court, Hirofumi's plans, and the movement of merchandise from Utawa's trading house through Shizimu's merchants. A handful of other scrolls and books are written in some cipher that cannot be decoded without the assistance of someone familiar with the Cult's codes. If this can be done, the documents detail the shipping routes Feydn and his ally Balyezn used to reach the island from the Ivory Coast. The lone exception is a single scroll found within quarters formerly occupied by Feydn (although the characters will likely not realize that at the time). If that scroll is discovered, read the following:

My dear friends,
I owe you a debt of gratitude for helping me expunge the weak and unworthy from this wretched lot. Truly, you have been tremendous allies in my struggle. I have left your beautiful land and returned home to continue my purification campaign, and I feel my goal is near at hand. Be assured, dear friends, that we shall meet again. And on that date, I shall repay you in full for your assistance.
Feydn Rafiq

From this information, the characters may rightfully assume that Feydn's motivations are something other than he has led them to believe, and that the threat he poses to Rokugan is not yet over. They are, of course, entirely correct.



APPENDIX:

RESOLUTION

As the Battle of Oblivion's Gate comes to an end, the Empire slowly realizes what has happened. For the past two years, all of Rokugan has been in a war with an invisible enemy. All of the civil strife, all of the pain and misery that has torn the clans apart, is traceable to the Lying Darkness (and, to a lesser degree, the Shadowlands). Now that Oblivion's Gate has been destroyed and Toturi has been restored to his throne, however, the Empire's problems have only begun.

During the battle, many spirits returned through Oblivion's Gate and were given mortal flesh once more. When the Gate was destroyed, these men and women found themselves trapped in Rokugan. Suddenly, many of the Empire's most celebrated and renowned heroes were given flesh once more.

The Crab Clan — With Hida Yakamo's ascension, Hida O-Ushi reassumes command of her clan. The lands surrounding Hiruma Castle are purified of the Taint, though they are left barren by the Kuni rituals. The Crab enjoy the respect of their fellow clans as they have not enjoyed it in generations for now every clan knows the horrors the Crab face every day. Yet this newfound respect comes at a price. Supplies of jade, the Crab's first line of defense against corruption, are at an all-time low, with no new sources in sight.

The Crane Clan — The fortunes of war have been kind to the Crane Clan. Forging alliances with many of the Minor Clans, the Crane are a thriving trade center of the Empire once more. Their only true loss is that Daidoji Uji is badly

wounded during the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, and can no longer serve as the charismatic field commander he once was. Nonetheless Uji refuses to be idle, and continues to coordinate his crack troops from the heart of Shiro Daidoji.

The Dragon Clan — As Togashi Hoshi restores order to the chaotic Dragon lands, the Dragon Clan face a time of deep introspection. They have faced the darkest side of themselves, and risen above it. The truth is clear — the Dragon can be a powerful force for violence as well as peace, and by ignoring either facet of themselves they become weak and vulnerable. Thus the Three Orders of the Dragon are established to replace the ise zumi monks of old. These are the Hitomi who represent passion and violence, the Togashi who represent peace and introspection, and the Hoshi, who stand as the balance between.

The Lion Clan — Following Ikoma Tsanuri's death at the Battle of Oblivion's Gate, Kitsu Motso assumes command of the Lion Clan. His is the unenviable duty of restoring the honor of his clan in the wake of Kitsu Okura's foul deeds, but he is not found wanting. Meanwhile Okura no Oni, the demon that redeemed itself at Oblivion's Gate, is rescued from Jigoku by the Elemental Dragons, stripped of her Taint, and placed at the gates of Tengoku as the Guardian of Heaven.

The Mantis Clan — The Mantis Clan is shocked to learn that Yoritomo numbers among the many dead at Oblivion's Gate, slain in combat with Goju Adorai himself. Yoritomo's chosen heir is Bayushi Aramasu, his adopted son. Aramasu's

first act as Champion is to take the Yoritomo name. Shortly thereafter he petitions the Emperor to allow the two clans still loyal to his father's Alliance, the Centipede and Wasp, to become families of the Mantis. Toturi agrees. The Centipede retain their Moshi family name, while the Wasp become the Tsuruchi family.

The Phoenix Clan — Though Naka Kuro's loss is mourned, he has left a strong Elemental Council and respected Champion in his place. The Phoenix are still not as strong as they once were, but are well on their way to recovery. The Agasha family petitions the Emperor to remain a family of the Phoenix Clan. As the Dragon are strangely silent on the matter, Toturi agrees. Shortly after the battle of Oblivion's Gate, Isawa Norikazu, whose prophecy and wisdom helped guide the Phoenix throughout these troubled times, succumbs to the same fever that granted him his prophetic visions. Just before Norikazu dies, the Dragon of Fire restores him to health, granting him the power of a true Oracle.

The Scorpion Clan — The Scorpion Clan's exile is officially repealed, and they are welcomed back in the lands they once called home. The other Great Clans feel a strong sense of shame in the presence of the Scorpion for having falsely accused them in such a manner, and naturally the Scorpion capitalize, rebuilding their empire of secrets, blackmail, and manipulation. As a strange footnote to history, Toturi makes several requests for the name of the Scorpion actress who aided Isawa Hochiu in the final battle, but the Scorpion never reply.

The Unicorn Clan — The arrival of Khan Moto Gaheris and his desert tribesmen is an oddity to which the Empire (and even his fellow Unicorn) does not immediately adjust. Surprisingly, Gaheris adopts to life in the Empire extremely rapidly. In the name of his clan, he surrenders the title "Right Hand of the Emperor" to the Lion Clan. In Gaheris' mind, the title has little meaning, and the gesture wins him many allies among the powerful Lion.

The Naga — With the Darkness finally defeated, the Naga can resist the call of sleep no longer. Over the course of several weeks, the Naga retreat to their cities and fall into a deep slumber. The Unicorn Clan is granted the honor of guarding their sleeping cities, and is granted a golden pearl in return. This pearl contains the humanity which entered the Akasha through Hida Yakamo's rebirth, an uncomfortable oddity that nonetheless resulted in a thing of beauty. Shortly after the pearl is exchanged, it hatches, giving birth to a human girl who bears a strong connection to the Naga race. She is named Akasha, for the soul all Naga share, and is raised by the Unicorn Clan to become the guardian of a people she has never truly known.

The Shadowlands — With the death of Kuni Yori and Moto Tsume the Shadowlands is left without a willing leader. The hordes of darkness fall to chaos and infighting. For a time, all is quiet beyond the Kaiu Wall, or at least as quiet as can be expected.

The Minor Clans — Though most of the Minor Clans are largely unaffected by the War Against the Shadow or its outcome, there is one exception. When the Scorpion return from the Burning Sands to find the Monkey Clan occupying territory that was once theirs, they are most displeased.

Though Toku offers to surrender the lands to the Scorpion, they refuse his offer. Instead, they insist that Toku keep the lands he has guarded so dutifully on one condition — that he accept a Scorpion wife. Toku is reluctant at first, but when he gazes upon the beauty of the Shosuro daimyo's sister, his heart is lost to her, and he agrees.

Toturi's Army — With so many members of Toturi's Army now dead or moved on to greater things, General Saigorei realizes that he is one of the few men left who still wears the symbol of the Black Lion. The time of Toturi's Army, he realizes, is done for now all of Rokugan is Toturi's army. With a heavy heart, Saigorei rolls up the banner that once flew proudly over Beiden Pass. What once was Toturi's Army now becomes the Legion of the Wolf, an army of noble ronin who serve in the Emperor's name.

The Imperial Families — Numbered among the returned spirits are several Hantei Emperors, but for the most part, these Emperors honor the current regime and abandon the Hantei name, retiring to quiet monasteries. One, however, wisely chooses not to reveal his return. Hantei XVI, the Steel Chrysanthemum, has returned from the Realm of Slaughter along with his loyal servant Hida Tsuneo. For now, the mad Emperor bides his time and watches the Empire cautiously. He marks the locations of the other returned Emperors, for they must be dealt with before his plans truly begin.

And, one by one, these Hantei begin to meet mysterious ends.

THE FIVE CITIES

Many tales weave through the War Against the Darkness, and some have been forgotten. In the secluded halls of Shinden Asahina, some whisper of the savage battles that occurred beyond Oblivion's Gate. They speak of the noble sacrifices of ancestral spirits who perished battling the Darkness, their spiritual forms passing on to a nebulous and uncertain fate. They tell of five cities that stood at the edge of Yomi.

When the battle reached its peak, the Darkness conquered these five cities. As Goju Adorai mustered his forces, flames scoured the face of Yomi. The five cities might have perished, had fate not intervened.

As Adorai's forces prepared to destroy the cities, the Elemental Masters arrived at the Gates of Volturnum. Drawing upon all their power, they cast a mighty ritual to quench the fires of Yomi. Yet their considerable might was not enough; the Council was incomplete. There was no Master of Water — no suitable shugenja had been found in the Academy and Naka Kuro had fallen to the enemy only weeks before.

Yet a fifth voice was soon heard, and the Masters' spell intensified. Isawa Tomo, the Master of Water who fell on the Day of Thunder, had returned through Oblivion's Gate beside Toturi and many other heroes. Sensing his brethren's plight, he added his magic to theirs, and the five cities were saved.

Yet these five cities were not untouched. The realms around them had burned away, leaving them cast adrift. They settled in the mortal realm, and were changed by the Masters' magic. Each now embodied the essence of the magic that had saved them.

The City of Loyalty — A city of solidly built castles and high walls, it represents the power of Earth. This city appeared in the mountains near Nikesake, and was first discovered by Saigorei and his Legion of the Wolf. Though he claimed it in the name of the Emperor, Toturi granted this city to his beloved wife, Kaede, as a dowry. The city is still largely uninhabited, though a small branch of the Isawa Academy uses the area as a training ground for young Earth Tensai. The Legion of the Wolf also maintains a dojo here, and has sworn to protect the city in the Empress' name.

The City of Blood — Once called the City of Tears, this city represents the power of Water. The city was renamed by the Bloodspeakers who first discovered it. Sensing the Phoenix ritual that saved the city, the Bloodspeaker Jama Suru cast his own spell in reply, sending the Phoenix a vision of the city being consumed by the Darkness before it ever arrived in Rokugan. Later, during the War Against the Spirits, a cadre of Phoenix Bloodspeakers manipulated Imperial documents so that it was believed that a large amount of resources from the annual Emperor's Blessing were dedicated to restoring a ravaged city in Phoenix lands. These resources instead went into the Bloodspeaker's coffers, and the City of Blood found a place on Imperial Maps as the small village of Mizu Mura. It remains a stronghold of the Bloodspeakers to this day.

The City of Empty Dreams — The strangest of the five cities, the City of Empty Dreams represents the power of the Void. It stands on an island off the Phoenix coast, though it is not always actually there. It can be seen only by Ishiken, those rare shugenja who can harness the power of the Void. It is said that, once within the city, one can look out onto times long past or times yet to be. Even worlds that never existed are visible from the walls of the city, though once a visitor passes beyond the walls he finds himself in Rokugan once more. Shiba Ningen, Master of the Void, has spent a great deal of time studying the City of Empty Dreams and still does not understand how the city's magic works.

The City of White Clouds — This city represents the power of Air. Following the War Against the Darkness, the city appeared in the lands of the Dragon Clan. A band of Hoshi monks eagerly set out to explore the city's mysteries, but instead found the path blocked by the sinister form of the newly born Shadow Dragon. The Shadow Dragon claimed the city of Air as his own, a reminder of his former status as the Dragon of Air. Looping its powerful coils around the entire city, the Shadow Dragon drew the City of White Clouds into Nothing. If the city still stands, it is likely it has been relocated deep in the Shadowlands. Only the Goju who serve the Shadow Dragon know for certain.

The City of Living Flame — Like the City of Empty Dreams, the City of Living Flame appeared on an island off the coast of Phoenix lands. This inhospitable island represents the power of Fire. An enormous volcano dominates the center of the island, and though it frequently erupts the city shows no damage other than a permanent layer of soot. Few have braved the depths of the city and returned to report what they find there, but it is said that the true secrets of Fire can only be found in its seething heart.

Effects of the Elemental Cities — Beyond the effects listed above, each of the Elemental Cities is infused with powerful magic. These effects are readily accessible to any shugenja who enters the area.

Any shugenja within an Elemental City is considered two levels higher for the purposes of casting spells that pertain to the element that city represents, and the DC to resist such spells is increased by +2. The City of Blood also confers this effect on any maho cast within the city.

Any shugenja within an Elemental City gains two Free Raises when casting spells pertaining to the element that city represents. The City of Blood also confers this effect on any maho cast within the city.

STEPPING AWAY FROM CANON

While the rest of this book presents an "official" version of the events during the War Against the Darkness, this need not be the story your campaign tells. In your Rokugan, things might have happened a bit differently, especially if the players already know how the story is "supposed" to end. If the GM wishes to tell the tale of the Hidden Emperor Saga with a twist, then any of the following might serve as an inspiration for the campaign.

YORITOMO THE BLOODY

Here, peace is restored to the Empire somewhat sooner than usual — but it does not last long. The Kami Shinjo offers Yoritomo the throne and, unlike in the canon tale, Yoritomo accepts. As his first act as Emperor he hunts down and destroys Toturi, the corrupted madman. Discovering the hidden Emperor's location is a simple matter for Tsuruchi's bounty hunters. When the Empress attempts to defend Toturi, it is presumed that she, too, has been corrupted. Though many give their lives battling her, Yoritomo's armies overwhelm Kaede and execute Toturi.

Unfortunately, such a bloody beginning to Yoritomo's rule only sets a precedent for violence. Yoritomo discovers that any attempt at peaceful negotiation is interpreted as insincere, forcing him to back his edicts through sheer military might. When the Phoenix protest the death of Kaede, Imperial Legions are dispatched into Phoenix lands to forcibly silence the Phoenix. When the Lion refuse to surrender Kitsu Okura for interrogation, the Emperor's armies invade Lion lands.

Soon the Empire winds up in even deeper chaos. No one is more disturbed by these events than Yoritomo himself, who finds that only through violence are his edicts obeyed. With each day that passes, he wishes that he had rejected Shinjo's offer of the throne. Meanwhile, as the Bloody Emperor enforces his will, the Darkness continues to build its forces around Oblivion's Gate. Can the Empire unite behind a murderous Emperor and put an end to this menace?

THE HIDDEN CHAMPIONS

In this version of the tale, the Darkness is more outrageous. Rather than simply kidnapping the Emperor, it kidnaps Toturi and each of the Clan Champions. After throwing the Clans into chaos by robbing them of their leaders, it then seeks to corrupt the Champions and return them to the Empire just as it did with Toturi in the canon version.

These efforts at corruption are met with varying degrees of success. Yakamo cannot be corrupted so long as he bears the Jade Hand, and the Crab will be greatly suspicious if he returns separated from it. Hitomi is already being influenced by the Darkness, so kidnapping her would serve little purpose. Shiba Tsukune is guided by the immortal soul of Shiba, which might offer her some protection from the Darkness' influence. Exactly what happens to each of the Champions is an interesting idea to explore, and no two of the kidnapped Champions should react to the Darkness' attempts to corrupt them in the same way. Perhaps some resist its attempts altogether while others embrace the power and use it to gain vengeance upon their enemies.

SHOSURO TRIUMPHANT

Perhaps Goju Adorai never betrays the Darkness by reporting Shosuro's escape to Bayushi. Thus, Shosuro never returns to the lake beneath Kyuden Bayushi. Instead, Shosuro is drawn to Volturum, where she replaces Adorai as the Lying Darkness' foremost servant. Shosuro's power overshadows Adorai's, and she certainly does not fall for the Scorpion tricks that caused Adorai's defeat in the canon history. Isawa Hochiu is slain, Oblivion's Gate opens wide, and the minions of Shosuro scatter through the Spirit Realms to destroy all of creation.

Now the player characters must face a greater threat than Rokugan has ever known. The Spirit Realms begin to unravel; ancestors, oni, gaki, and animal spirits may appear spontaneously in the mortal world. Entire cities may vanish into the realm of dream. The player characters are left with the impossible task of succeeding where the Empire's greatest heroes failed. They must find a way to stop Shosuro from unmaking creation, even as the Spirit Realms unravel around them. Even if they succeed, the very nature of the mortal realm will be changed, forever scarred by Shosuro's incredible power.

HITOMI THE DESTROYER

In the canon version of the timeline, Hitomi faces her madness but ultimately rises above it. Kokujin flees from her presence. The Togashi are restored to their rightful place. Hoshi becomes Dragon Champion and Hitomi ascends to the Celestial Heavens as Lady Moon. In this version, Hitomi is not so fortunate. She truly embraces Kokujin's advice and sinks to new depths of madness and evil. What began with the Togashi continues with the Mirumoto and Kitsuki. All those who do not take the Hitomi name and accept her mystic tattoos are hunted and slain as traitors. As her madness escalates, the Obsidian Hand consumes more of her body, and soon she resembles a living statue of gleaming black stone.

In time, even exile is not an acceptable fate. She dispatches her *kikage zumi* to hunt down all Togashi who joined the Brotherhood, as well as the Agasha who took refuge among the Phoenix. The monks and Phoenix are offered a single chance to bow before Lady Moon and take her name. Those who refuse, perish.

The cult of Hitomi spreads across the northern Empire. The Darkness forestalls its plans at Oblivion's Gate for now, instead concentrating on dominating Hitomi. Her *kikage zumi* become suffused with the power of Darkness spawn. Adorai himself takes the Hitomi name and stands beside Kokujin as Hitomi's chief enforcer.

In this version the threat the Darkness poses is perhaps a great deal less subtle, but no less dangerous. In canon, Hitomi defeated the Darkness by assuming the power of Lord Moon and giving the Darkness a name. With Hitomi serving the Darkness as a willing pawn, how will the heroes find a way to name that which has no name?

DEDICATIONS

SHAWN CARMAN

"To my ever-patient wife Julie. Love you, babe!"

AARON MEDWIN

"To Allison, the future."

TRAVIS HEERMAN

"I want to thank the original creators of *L5R* for coming up with the coolest game in the universe, and the rest of the *L5R* writing team for giving me the opportunity to contribute."

RICH WULF

"For the Splendid Chicken. If you have no idea what I'm talking about, that may be for the best."

"DO NOT WASTE YOUR LIFE SEARCHING FOR SECRETS,
GINAWA-SAMA. I FEAR YOU WILL FIND NOTHING!"

- KITSUKI KAAGI

Welcome to the Jade Empire.

The Emperor Toturi has ruled Rokugani for two years of peace, but that peace will soon be shattered. When the Emperor vanishes from his bedchamber, accusations and speculation fly. Old hatreds boil to the surface. Before long, the clans collide once more in a war that threatens all the Empire.

And in the shadows of Mori Kage Castle, Goju Adorai makes his plans. A force older than the world itself prepares to twist all of creation to its purpose. The time has come, and at last it has the tool it needs to turn Rokugan against itself.

At last it has an Emperor.

Within *The Hidden Emperor* you will find the following:

- A complete and updated history of the War Against the Darkness, retelling the story of the Jade Edition story arc of *Legend of the Five Rings*. Old tales are retold for posterity, and new mysteries are revealed.
- New mechanics and adventure hooks dealing with this period in history, but that can easily be adapted to a campaign set in any time period.
- A complete campaign set in the War Against the Darkness.
- Updated statistics for over forty of the most important personalities in this era.

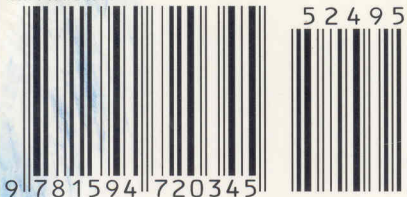
This book is a dual-system supplement for the *Legend of the Five Rings Role-Playing Game™*, *Second Edition™*, and *Rokugan™*, the d20 Companion for *Legend of the Five Rings*. Players and GMs may also find it useful as a source of interesting new options for any d20 System campaign.

Game Masters running the Second Edition L5R RPG will need a copy of the *Legend of the Five Rings Game Master's Guide™* and the *Player's Guide™*. Players need only the *Player's Guide™*.

Dungeon Masters running d20 System games will need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Handbook™*, *Oriental Adventures™*, and *Rokugan*. Players will need only a *Player's Handbook™*.



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